

King Vannius



Guido von List

King Vannius.

A Germanic royal drama
by

Guido von List.

1899.



CHARACTERS

VANNIUS of the house of the “Druthi.”

NANA.

Young Prince VANNIHOST.

VANGIO, a cousin of Vannius.

SIDO, a servant of Vannius.

WITTIG, the blacksmith.

KADOLD,

RANDMAR, } Quadi freemen.

SINTOLD.

RUMOLD, burgrave and city councilor in Eburodun.

ROLF, house steward at the royal court.

RAFFO, blacksmith's apprentice.

HANGO, blacksmith's apprentice.

JUTA, the Haag-Idis (*priestess*):

MECHTHILDIS.

GERBERGA.

WIEBURGA.

PETRONIUS, legate of Emperor Tiberius.

MARINIUS, Roman centurion.

KAIMAR, Duke of the Jazyges.

Citizens of Eburodun.

Royal guard (*bodyguards*).

King's men (*warriors*).

Women and girls from Eburodun.

Captured Roman legionaries.

Jazyges.

Armed men from Vangio and Sido's army.

Servants and maids of the royal court.

Time: The first three acts during the reign of Emperor Tiberius, the last two acts during the reign of Emperor Caligula.

Place of Action: The first act takes place in front of the blacksmith's cave (*Beczissfalaböhle*) in Wuotansthäl (*Adamsthal near Brno*): The second act takes place one year later in the grove of Halgadom (*temple site*) next to the blacksmith's cave. The third act takes place three months later in the royal court at Eburodun. The fourth act takes place in the same place, about fifteen years later. The fifth act takes place one year later in the military fortress at Stilifrieda.

Right and *left* of the actor.

First Act.

Wild mountain region in the Wuotansthal. Between pine trunks and bushes, raised above the stage floor, the entrance to Wuotan's cave,¹⁾ to which rock steps lead up. The cave is lit by a mighty fire. In front of the cave, on a protruding rock, is an anvil. WITTIG the blacksmith is busy with his assistants RAFFO and HANGO. RAFFO and HANGO strike the red-hot iron with large hammers, which WITTIG holds with tongs, and with a small hammer he does the finishing work. On one of the rock steps in front of the cave entrance stands VANNIUS leaning on his staff and watches the blacksmiths. VANGIO and SIDO sit behind him on boulders. Bright sunshine.

VANNIUS (*after watching the blacksmiths at work for a long time without saying a word*): What are you forging, blacksmith?

WITTIG (*hammering away without looking up; grumbling*): Chains.

VANNIUS (*surprised*): Chains!? For whom?

1) Today's Adamsthal with the Bezzisska Cave. See more details in the author's "Deutsch-mythologische Landschaftsbilder" (*German Mythological Landscape Pictures*).

WITTIG (*laughing wildly, continuing to hammer*): For whom?! — Blast and blue fire! — For those who could be lords but want to be servants, for those who could have good swords but prefer to wear bad chains; for those — (*hammers furiously, drowning out his own words*).

SIDO (*jumping up, irritated*): What's all this abuse, old man!?

VANGIO (*likewise, reaching for his sword*): You reeker!

VANNIUS (*remaining calm, casting commanding glances at his cousins, who then return to their places, still grumbling; then turning to the blacksmith, who grumbles as he hammers away*): I know of far better things to make with such good iron than chains.

WITTIG (*interrupting his fine work and looking at VANNIUS with contempt*): Blast and blue fire! You, milk-beard?

VANNIUS (*throwing away his weapons*): Give me the hammer and tongs. (*Goes to the anvil, takes the hammer and tongs from the astonished WITTIG and begins to forge.*)

WITTIG (*watching in amazement*): Milk-beard! My iron that Donar's Malmer will drive nine fathoms deep into the ground —

VANNIUS (*to the journeymen*): Strike, strike, strike! (*They hammer.*) Wait, my blacksmith, soon you shall see —

WITTIG (*with growing amazement*): Father Voland, Milkbeard knows your art! — Blast and blue fire!

SIDO (*with bitter rage toward VANGIO*): Is that not cowardly? Instead of the roughest of all forges, better to hammer his skull —

VANGIO: That's what I wanted to do, but (*glances at the blacksmith's apprentices*) they wouldn't allow it.

SIDO: He wants to do the same as Armin and Marbod, our cousin, and thus debase himself so deeply!

VANGIO: He shall not dare! — Armin! Marbod!

SIDO: His followers are many, ours are few. Be quick, my brother

VANGIO: I would be clever. (*glances slyly at VANNIUS*) I do not fear our cousin.

SIDO (*also glancing at Vannius, but mockingly to SIDO*): No?

WITTIG (*admiringly*): Father Voland, the milk-bearded one is a master!

VANNIUS (*to the journeymen*): Stop! — Ready! — Bring the cooling barrel! (*The journeymen lay down their hammers in amazement and go into the cave to fetch the barrel.* VANNIUS lifts the finished object — a spade —

with tongs and strikes it once with a hammer on the anvil.) There, now this “cold blow” so that, Loki, your chains will not break!

WITTIG (*with growing admiration*): Blast and blue fire! The “cold blow”! Does the miracle worker know this too? The ancient sacred master's custom?

RAFFO (*to HANGO, with whom he carries the cooling vat out of the cave*): He can do more than eat bread.

HANGO: A mighty master! (*They set the vat down in front of VANNIUS.*) There, master.

VANNIUS (*sticks the forged spade into the cooling vat, the water hisses*): There, the work is done; but the handle is still missing (*he breaks his staff in two and sticks the broken shaft into the spade, which he wedges in place. To WITTIG, whom he now shows the spade*). Well, master? Is my forging not worth more than your chains?

WITTIG: I don't know what you want. I feel so stupid here, under this roof! Tell me, you wondrous man, whose son are you born? Which master taught you his art? You are a mighty great master, well versed in the ancient sacred secret custom that is known only to a few.

VANNIUS: Who I am, others may tell you, master, and who taught me the art? It is enough for you that you recognize me as a master. But answer me, old man. Is not this spade a better thing than your chains?

WITTIG (*again grimly*): The Quadi should demand swords.

VANNIUS (*laughing*): They can get them from the Romans, they need spades now, and more than swords; of that you may be assured, dear master!

WITTIG: Spades?

RAFFO: More than swords?

HANGO: It's astonishing!

SIDO (*to VANGIO*): It's unheard of! To break their spears for a stupid spade.

VANGIO: And that's supposed to rule, with such servile thinking!

VANNIUS (*to the blacksmiths*): Yes, the Quadi now need spades and digging tools to enforce their right to rule.

WITTIG (*joyfully, signaling surprise to the others*): Your right as lords? Stranger, tell us more! Blast and blue fire!

(*A woman's cry is heard behind the scene. All are startled. Wittig, with a look of surprise, points to the cry. Everyone listens silently.*)

VANGIO (*to SIDO, quietly*): Now he can't do without the spear.

SIDO: I gladly grant our cousin this lesson.

(Renewed cries are heard, and JUTA's voice calling out.)

JUTA *(still behind the scene)*: Desecrator of the sacred!
Help!

WITTIG *(grabbing an iron bar)*: Come! Albruna is
calling for help! Swords! Swords! Blast and blue fire!

VANNIUS *(waving the spade)*: This does as well; where it
knocks, the door will be opened. *(Hurries off to the
right with WITTIG; the blacksmith's apprentices follow
with their heavy hammers.)*

RAFFO: Hey, get on with it *(Exits to the right.)*

HANGO: Human skulls will be our anvils! *(Exits.)*

SIDO: Come, brother. *(starts to follow the others.)*

VANGIO *(holds him back)*: Brother, there's no such hurry.

SIDO: No?

VANGIO: Think about it, if Petronius —

SIDO: You mean?

VANGIO: Who else but a Roman? — Surely not a
Marcomanni, not a Quadi — ?

SIDO: Yes! She called him a desecrator of the sacred!

VANGIO: I don't want to spoil my game with Petronius!

*(The sound of fighting can be heard in the distance and
VANNIUS' Hifthorn call.¹)*

VANGIO (*mockingly to SIDO*): Do you hear? — Call, cousin, call! Stay where you are, brother Sido, I'll keep watch. (*He starts to go right to look. VANNIUS's horn sounds again and similar calls answer from different directions.*)

SIDO: What's that? Could it be our cousin?

KADOLD (*enters hurriedly with several armed men*): That is Vannius' horn call! Quick! (*Sees SIDO and VANGIO; to themselves.*) Those toads! (*Starts to go right.*)

SIDO: Save us! Come quickly, help is needed!

KADOLD: I can see that; otherwise you would be there. (*Starts to pass. The commotion comes closer. One hears the blacksmith WITTIG calling.*)

WITTIG (*still behind the scene*): Blast and blue fire! Father Voland, we have the fellows. Tie up the scoundrels!

(*VANNIUS and WITTIG come from the right; the former leads PETRONIUS, the latter leading MARINIUS, who is bound. They are followed by RAFFO, HANGO, and several armed Quadi, who are driving bound Romans before them. They are followed by JUTA, the Albruna with NANA, WIEBURGA, MECHTHILDIS,*

- 1) VANNIUS' horn call must be a characteristic motif so that it can be distinguished from other horn calls

and GERBERGA)

VANGIO (*to SIDO*): Didn't I tell you?

SIDO (*frightened*): Truly, the Legate!

(Both try to hide in the crowd so as not to be noticed by the Legate.)

PETRONIUS: By Hercules! Tremble before the revenge of the lord of the world!

WITTING: Blast and blue fire! The lord of the world?

(Laughs.) The lord of the world he may be, but not the lord of the Quadi. What were you doing grazing where lady's slippers are in bloom?

KADOLD: Yes, what were you hunting where fat cows graze? You are a poor shepherd.

PETRONIUS: Mock the defenseless! But woe betide you! Caesar Tiberius (*General laughter.*) Laugh, only you will learn to fear!

(Repeated laughter.)

PETRONIUS What do you fear when you mock the mighty Caesar?

VANNIUS: What we Quadi fear, do you Romans want to know? You can find out. We Quadi and all who speak our language fear nothing in this world!

PETRONIUS: Nothing?

VANNIUS: Nothing!

PETRONIUS: Nothing, really nothing?

VANNIUS: Nothing! — Well, yes, but if you really want to know, we fear that the sky will fall down and bury us under its blue ruins.

PETRONIUS (*contemptuously*): Boasters!

VANNIUS (*shrugs his shoulders indifferently. To WITTIG*): Master smith! You may now make use of your chains. (*Horn calls are heard from various directions, which VANNIUS answers with his own call, without boasting about it. To WITTIG*.) Beat the woman-hunters into a gang and keep them well in your cave until I demand them from you. You are my guarantor for them and their lives. —

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! Who are you? Am I your servant that you command me? Am I your servant that you dare to give me orders?

VANNIUS: Who am I? A villain like you, not your master, not your servant.

WITTIG: And yet you give orders?

VANNIUS: In the name of the people, for one must think and act for all.

WITTIG: And who is that one?

JUTA (*stepping forward*): It is he! — As he has decided, so shall you fulfill Herians' sacred counsel! (*Murmurs of astonishment.*)

WITTIG (*stunned*): Blast and blue fire! By thundering Donar, is that the truth?

JUTA: It is! — Do what the heavenly ones command you through him!

WITTIG (*stunned*): So I will do it. — Raffo and Hango, bring the chains to the anvil.

RAFFO: That will make for some cheerful forging. (*Exits into the cave.*)

HANGO (*beginning to imitate the sound of hammer blows as he exits*): Bim, bim, bam! Bim, bim, bam! (*hurries after RAFFO.*)

(*Everyone looks in astonishment first at VANNIUS, then at the Albruna, who, with dignified calm and apparent indifference, slowly returns to the girls.*)

WITTIG (*astonished, quietly to KADOLD*): Tell me, Kadold, what does all this mean?

KADOLD: Save your astonishment until the end.

WITTIG: So you know?

KADOLD: Not much more than you yourself,

WITTIG (*annoyed*): I thought you knew more! Women's nonsense, I don't believe any of it!

KADOLD: Do it still. It must come to pass, whether woman or man proclaims it, for the victorious father Wuotan is always near us when we are worthy of him

WITTIG (*grumpy*): Blast and blue fire! Women's rabble!

KADOLD (*laughing*): You're your mother's son.

RAFFO (*knocking down the chains with a clang at the anvil*): What a merry jingle, like at Carnival! Hoiho! Narro! -

HANGO (*likewise*): Clink, clink, clink; not a limb shall break!

WITTIG (*grabbing PETRONIUS by the shoulder*): Come here, Roman, and let yourself be adorned; chains remain chains, whether they are made of gold or iron.

PETRONIUS (*snorting with rage*): You will pay for that, scoundrel, with a thousand deaths!

WITTIG (*forcing PETRONIUS to follow him to the anvil*): Blast and blue fire! Follow or I'll break your bones! (*He leads him to the anvil.*) RAFFO! Secure the shackles!

(*RAFFO and HANGO rivet the iron clasps of the chains to PETRONIUS' arms and legs.*)

PETRONIUS (*as above*): Jupiter Donans, hear my curse!

RAFFO (*gives him a blow*): Be silent and keep quiet. (*He forces his foot onto the anvil and rivets the foot shackle tightly.*) I can also force such a dwarf.

WITTIG (*calling down to those below*): Bring the others!

(*MARINIUS and the other captured Romans are led up to the cave by the armed men. Groups form which seem to be discussing the events animatedly, as their silent play suggests, and await the further developments with tension. In the middle, at the front, stands VANNIUS, lost in thought, leaning on his spade.*)

(*Aside, to the right behind VANNIUS, stands the Albruna, surrounded by the girls. NANA is lost in reverie, standing a little closer to VANNIUS, apparently uninterested in the conversation between JUTA and the girls.*)

GERBERGA: Tell me, you woman of all wisdom, who is the young hero who wields his spade like a sword?

JUTA: A Quadi — I know nothing more than that.

WIEBURGA: Is that all you know? Wise Albruna, and yet —

MECHTHILDIS: And yet you said before to the blacksmith — ?

GERBERGA: Yes, yes, you said —

JUTA: What?

MECHTHILDIS: That he was the one who —

GERBERGA: The one, the right one, by whom the victorious father Wuotan proclaims his will. You must know him?

JUTA: I don't have to. I only saw that he wanted what was right, and that's why I made the prediction.

GERBERGA: And you really don't know him, Allberatherin?

JUTA: I saw him today for the first time.

MECHTHILDIS: So ask him, Allberatherin —

GERBERGA: Yes, yes, please, dear Haag-Idis, please, we would very much like to know who the young hero is!

WIEBURGA: Yes, please, please! As Mechthildis says —

JUTA: Remember: an Albruna never asks questions; for it is her sacred duty only to give answers.

(They talk together. NANA stands aside, lost in thought, as if she were not interested in the conversation of her companions. She has been exchanging furtive glances with VANNIUS. She and VANNIUS are undecided what to do.)

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! They are now bound like Loki himself. Throw them down with him into the deepest shaft.

PETRONIUS: O Sun, greet the eternal Rome for me! Hecate, take me into your kingdom and hear my

curse! (*He goes back into the cave, his chains rattling, led by a Quadi.*) Slavery for you Quadi, down to the last man!

KADOLD: you must shout louder, Roman, the ear of the rock is deaf to such a dwarf's voice.

(*The other Romans are led away amid lamentations such as "My Italy!" "Hu, the throat of Hephaestus," "To Hades," each followed by a Quadi after PETRONIUS. MARINIUS is the last to come, led by KADOLD.*)

KADOLD: Come, my dear guest! The Willekumm down there is well chilled and flows abundantly from the crevice in the rock. You will not die of thirst.

MARINIUS: Save your mockery, Quadi; I am a Roman. (*follows the others with KADOLD, chains clanking. Murmurs of the people, agitated groups*)

VANGIO (*coming forward with SIDO to the left, to the latter*): This is going to be bad weather.

SIDO: Cousin Vannius is playing a game of chance. If he succeeds...

VANGIO: What can he be thinking? That childish game with the spade? He's doing nothing without purpose or goal. (*They talk quietly together.*)

NANA (*has moved closer and closer to VANNIUS and now walks quickly and decisively toward him*): My brave liberator!

VANNIUS (*joyfully moved*): Speak, what do you want, beautiful child?

NANA: To thank you —

VANNIUS: Thank me? — I beg you, don't do that! To thank me!? Did I do more than my duty? Do you not know, my dear child, how grateful I am to the lovely lady who led you into my path? Do you not know how grateful I am to you for finding the first words I was searching for in vain?

NANA: You? You must be joking —

VANNIUS: I? — Joking?! Is it not custom that I should address you in such a case?

NANA: Custom? Yes, but that applies to the weak, not to heroes, to those who still need guidance! But those who are conscious that they want and do what is right may dare to break the chains of restraint that were created only for the immature, but never for the free spirit.

VANNIUS (*looking at her admiringly*): I am amazed, who taught you to think so proudly?

NANA: Me? No one. I know it myself. Look, my dear hero. Custom would also require me to do so: "A maiden is not allowed to speak first to a stranger; she must wait until her mother or nurse has spoken for her." See, my brave savior, I too should have waited

patiently until the Albruna there, in beautiful speech, would have paid you thanks. That would have taken too long, and so I took it upon myself. I should not have done so, and yet I know that I did no wrong.

VANNIUS (*admiringly*): What a royal spirit! You, lovely girl, how happy your words make me, how blessed I am that I am allowed to give you to that accursed man

NANA: Don't be so hard on yourself! You are also in the same situation as him, you would have acted no differently than he did! Far from home, in enemy territory —

VANNIUS (*shocked*): Maiden!

NANA: Forgive me, my brave savior! I never wanted to hurt you. With all heart I thank you for your heroic deed, but it is my nature to think justly and always speak the truth, and I have always hated lies and hypocrisy.

VANNIUS (*with growing admiration*): First I called you a child, then a girl, then a maiden, now I must call you a heroine! You cannot be of lowly birth, you who are worthy to see a royal diadem on your proud head!

NANA: A royal diadem? I have never dreamed of such a thing. Is there really something so great, so unheard of in what I have said?

VANNIUS: You don't know that?

NANA: Who should have told me? The woodpecker, the deer, the delicate wild rose? They trust me greatly in the lonely, sacred hour of twilight, when the sun rises golden-red above those treetops and the secret, silent forest sings its song to its creator in a gentle rustling. But neither the woodpecker nor the blackbird ever told me that I am so important that I should wear a queen's crown. Even the good woman Juta knows nothing of such news.

VANNIUS: Are you a child of Halgadom?

NANA: No, but who my father is and where my mother is, the Albruna will not tell me, and it is this question that so often makes me sad.

VANNIUS: Poor child! I will help you search for them, trust me. But look, there comes the blacksmith out of the cave.

NANA: You will find them? You will? (*She takes his hand and presses it to her heart*): Tell me when, when — ?

(*The blacksmith with KADOLD, RAFFO, HANGO, and the Quadi come down from the cave and approach VANNIUS.*)

VANNIUS (*quickly*): When? How can I say that now? But speak, my child, where shall I find you?

NANA: If you call three times like a golden eagle, I will come.

VANNIUS: Good, but where?

NANA: Here, not too far from Halgadom. And how can I call you when I'm looking for you?

VANNIUS (*quietly sings his horn call to her*): Like this. But where will you find me?

NANA: When I need you, I will find you. What is your name?

VANNIUS: Vannius; and you, my sweet child?

NANA: The forest women call me Nana. So farewell, goodbye. (*She hesitantly lets go of his hand, looks at him for a long time with large childlike eyes, and then suddenly hurries back to Lady JUTA, in her haste casually trilling VANNIUS' horn call.*)

VANNIUS (*looking after her delightedly*): What was that? Nana. Balders' bride was also called Nana. (*He starts to run after her.*)

VANGIO (*puts his right hand on his shoulder*): Cousin —

VANNIUS (*impatiently*): Well?

VANGIO (*points to WITTIG, who is being held back by curious onlookers but is clearly trying to go to VANNIUS*): Cousin! This could be dangerous.

VANNIUS: What?

VANGIO: Petronius! Marinus!

VANNIUS: Do you think so? I think differently.

VANGIO: I only wanted to warn you; you have captured her, let her slip away, they will thank you for it. I advise you out of loyalty —

VANNIUS: I thank you for your loyal advice, but I have decided otherwise. (*To WITTIG.*) Well my blacksmith?

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! They are well taken care of down there. There they can struggle, scream, curse, and converse with the torrent. But now tell me, Quadi, what do you think we should do next? My old foster brother, Kadold, years ago we drank the sacred blood together, he knows and respects you, Quadi, and revealed to me that you are descended from the “Druthi” family and are Vannius.

KADOLD: Yes, he is Vannius, and he wields a good sword. But tell me, Vannius, how is it that you are here unarmed, with only a grave spade as your adornment?

WITTIG: Yes, yes, this grave spade, I almost forgot — Blast and blue fire, people, look at this wonderous man. He forged it himself, so quickly and deftly, even Master Voland himself could not have done it better (*ALL crowd forward to look at the spade*). Tell us what you intended to do with it. Go on, tell us, Vannius, the Romans are taken care of.

VANNIUS: Then hear, Quadi, what I have to say to you. You all know how King Katuald lost his crown, and how the Romans have confined us in these ravines. But we Quadi want to be free, we want to exercise our rights as masters on the land that has been ours since the beginning of time.

ALL: Yes, yes, that is what we want!

VANNIUS: What good will it do us if we defeat the Romans? They will come back when the crops are ripe, to harvest where we have plowed and sown with our sweat. Do we want to toil forever for foreign parasites?

ALL: No!

KADOLD: But what shall we do?

VANGIO: If you were clever, I would know what to advise.

SIDO: Listen to him, he means well by you.

KADOLD: Don't listen to him, my friends, that is my advice. First let Vannius speak to you.

VANNIUS: Listen to him; after he has spoken I will tell you what you must do.

ALL: So speak, we are listening.

KADOLD (*quietly to VANNIUS*): That was not wise of you.

VANNIUS: He is my cousin and therefore my friend.

ALL: Hear what he says.

VANGIO: Quadi! The Romans are too powerful and will always come to rob us of our harvest, and then we will starve through the winter —

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire, we'll beat them to death!

(Murmurs among the people.)

VANGIO: There are too many of them! That's why I advise you to make peace with the Romans, pay them the tithe they demand, and we will have peace and protection from our enemies. *(Murmurs for and against among the people.)* We have captured the legate of the Roman Emperor; he is our scourge, there will be —

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! I will either forge swords or chains, whatever you want.

VANNIUS *(waving his spade)*: Swords, yes! And if we have too few, we will get as many as we need from the Romans, for our brave smith Wittig has his hands full forging spades for us, which we need more urgently than the best swords. And if we lack weapons, such a spade is good enough to smash Roman skulls.

RAFFO: Yes, it is. Vannius sent five Romans to Hel with his grave-spade today. They lie over there.

HANGO: Hey, I believe that, and blacksmith's hammers do the same; there are harder anvils than Roman helmets.

ALL (*murmurs of approval and nodding*).

KADOLD: Hail to you, Vannius, but what do you want do you want with so many grave tools?

VANNIUS: I want nothing with it. But the Quadi need it to build large ring walls out there in the flat country down to the Danube. Behind such ring walls, our women, our children, our herds, and our harvests find protection and refuge while we men fight the enemy. We can also gather in such castles or military stables, wait for reinforcements, and defy the enemy in safety. The spade, Quadi, must restore to you the right of lordship in the land, which you can never win with the sword alone.

(*Initial astonishment at the surprise, then growing murmurs for and against; groups form to discuss VANNIUS' proposal.*)

VANGIO: It is a bold idea, but who is to do the daily work with the spade?

SIDO: Not we, who were born to the sword?

QUADI (*gathering around VANGIO*): No, not us.

WITTIG (*to his group*): Blast and blue fire, the council is good! I will forge grave goods from all the iron I can

find. Old Eticho of Blansegge ¹⁾ must hurry to melt as much iron from his ore as I now need.

KADOLD: Hail Vannius, that is a proposal —

QUADI (*calling over from VANGIO's group*): Who shall dig?

KADOLD: All of us; it is for our women, our children —

WITTIG: For the right of the Quadi to rule our land! Blast and blue fire, whoever doesn't get himself a digging tool will be hammered to pieces like the Roman servants over there!

(*Cheers and disapproval, noise.*)

VANNIUS (*shouting over the noise*): First am I a Quadi, then a sword-born of the Druthi family, and only lastly am I Vannius himself. I will work with the grave tools until the work is done. (*Noisy demonstrations for and against.*) Who will follow me?

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire, Vannius, why are you still asking? I, and us all!

(*Applause from all sides, even some from VANGIO's group cross over.*)

1) Today, Blansko in Moravia.

VANGIO (*seeing his group dwindle*): Cousin, I will follow you!

(*JUTA has climbed up to the cave with the girls and now stands, surrounded by them, on the rocky ledge, NANA has stayed below; she is gathering flowers and twigs, which she is weaving into a wreath.*)

SIDO (*quietly to VANGIO*): That was clever of you. Always go with the majority, then you won't hit a stone. (*Loudly.*) Cousin Vannius, hail to you! — Give me such a grave, I will dig as if it were for red gold!

VANNIUS: Quadi, hear more. The Quadi are gathering here from all the districts to break out against the Roman army, which is idly resting at Eburodun.¹⁾ I myself have traversed the districts and gathered the army.

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! You did all this and I called you Milk-beard!

VANNIUS (*smiling*): Siegfried was also a Milk-beard, and yet your anvil is still in one piece, unlike Mime's. That may be your consolation, brave Wittig!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire, my consolation!? — Siegfried? Mime? Truly! The horned Siegfried also understood Voland's art, but he forged a good sword,

1) Today Brno.

and you — ?

VANNIUS: He forged what he needed, and I forged what is needed today; thus we are alike and different at the same time.

NANA (*having finished the wreath, hurries to VANNIUS, singing his Hifthorn's call softly, and places the wreath on his head*): You resemble Siegfried, Vannius; you are a blacksmith like him, so be like him, a proud and victorious king!

VANNIUS (*taken aback*): What are you doing, girl?

NANA: What I could not keep silent, my proud king!

JUTA (*from above*): Hail King Vannius! He shall be the King of the Quadi!

NANA: I call your Quadi, proud king! (*Runs off to the right, singing loudly the call of his horn. She can be heard repeating the song several times, growing fainter and fainter.*)

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! I will forge the crown from ancient and sacred Voland gold!

KADOLD: Blow the horn, King Vannius!

VANNIUS (*does so*).

ALL: Hail to our King!

(Horn calls echo from all sides. Armed Quadi advance from the right and left.)

KADOLD *(to WITTIG)*: Bring the bound Romans; our King shall hold his triumphal procession.

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! *(Hurries with RAFFO and HANGO toward the cave.)*

JUTA *(calling out over the agitated crowd)*: I command all of you nobles, high and low, of Heimold's lineage, to pay attention!

ALL: Hail to us! Hail to the land of the Quadi!

JUTA: Listen, then, you nobles, listen, all of you: Victorious Wuotan, the Invincible, Promises you, Quadi, the fulfillment of your wishes; For Wuotan gladly grants courageous peoples, in times of need, fearless men full of manly courage as leaders to power, to wealth, to greatness, to princely freedom; as cowardly peoples sink into shame and disgrace he lets them sink, striking them with blindness, with bondage and chains and spiritual infirmity. — So hear this, you battle-hardened Quadi: the strangling she-wolf from the banks of the Tiber, you will defeat in daring battle, as you fight for peace and freedom according to right, Therefore Wuotan chose you as a mighty king, the wise Vannius from the house of Druthis. So follow King Vannius through fierce battles, to the sunniest happiness, to princely freedom!

(General jubilation, shouts of "Hail!" and the clanging of weapons, in which NANA's voice mingles, from the right singing VANNIUS' horn call.)

NANA *(comes running, carrying a helmet with an eagle's wings, a sword, a shield, and a purple cloak):* Here I bring the King's regalia! *(General astonishment.)*

KADOLD: Where did you get this treasure, my child?

NANA: Where? Up there in a hole in the rock. I found it a short time ago; a golden eagle showed it to me.

JUTA *(rushing down):* A golden eagle, did you say?

NANA: Yes, what else? At the time I did not know why; today the purpose was revealed to me. *(To VANNIUS)* My king, let yourself be adorned!

(Tries to gird him with the sword.)

JUTA: Leave that, Nana. that is my duty.

NANA: Let me do it; I believe it will please His Highness better. *(She fastens the sword and puts the cloak around him.)* How handsome you are as king! *(She hands him the helmet.)*

VANNIUS *(takes the wreath from his head and wraps it around the helmet):* This is my dearest jewel, as it comes from you.

NANA (*bows her head with a happy smile and hands VANNIUS the shield*): May it protect you, my king.

VANNIUS (*quickly kissing NANA on the forehead*): As I do you! (*Takes the shield, raises the spade.*) This grave spade shall be the King's scepter!

ALL: Hail Vannius, hail the King of the Quadi! Hail! Hail! Hail!

WITTIG (*appears with RAFFO, HANGO, and the bound ROMANS at the entrance to the cave*): My king, here I hand over the captured enemies to you. Blast and blue fire! What a proud coronation procession!

PETRONIUS: Your king? — Caesar Tiberius will soon dispel your delusion!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire, will you be silent?

KADOLD: Let him bark, blacksmith, since he can't bite!

ALL: Hail King Vannius!

(*The prisoners are led before VANNIUS and forced to kneel. Several Quadi bring a mighty shield, on which VANNIUS sits, whereupon he is lifted up amid general shouts of "Hail!"*)

NANA (*jumps joyfully like a child, singing VANNIUS' horn call.*)

ALL: Hail Vannius!

VANNIUS: Faithful to the freedom of the Quadi until death!

ALL: Hail Vannius, hail the King of the Quadi! Hail! Hail! Hail!

(*Horn fanfare.*)

(*The curtain falls.*)

End of the first act.

Second Act.

One year after the first act. Another part of the Wuotanthal ¹⁾ near Halgadom, ²⁾ not far from the blacksmith's cave of the first act. In the middle of a dense pine forest, above which wild rocky crags rise, is a forest glade, at the edges of which blooming wild rose bushes stand. Dawn is breaking. Just before sunrise. Lively forest life, ³⁾ the rustling of the forest, bird calls. Deer grazing can be seen through the bushes.

(NANA comes bounding in from the right, childishly cheerful, surrounded by a flock of chirping birds. A deer follows close behind her.)

NANA (*scattering food*): There, you little never-full! (*Stroking the deer.*) My dear little deer, what do you want to tell me? How your eyes shine! And you, blackbird? Not so impetuous! Your little sisters are also hungry, there is enough for all of you. Here, my

1) Wuotanthal, today's Adamsthal near Brno.

2) Halgadom, Heilighthum, place of worship of Wuotan.

3) Possibly to be expressed symphonically, similar to the descriptions of nature in Beethoven's "Pastoral Symphony" or in Rossini's "Tell" overture. In this case, the next individual scene with Nana should be melodramatic.

dear woodpecker — a fat morsel!

(A woodpecker flies onto her hand, she brings it to her mouth, from which it pecks away what is offered and flies away again.)

Is he in a hurry! *(A cuckoo calls.)* Hey, Good Morning, you little flour thief! How long must I wait? *(The cuckoo calls, NANA counts.)* One, two, three, four — five — what's taking so long? *(The cuckoo calls again.)* You naughty cuckoo! Quiet, be quiet! Will you be quiet, you unfaithful miller! You won't be quiet? Then I won't count anymore, you naughty rascal! *(The cuckoo calls several more times, as if to mock, then falls silent.)* Yes, mock all you want. Do you think you can steal my cheerfulness, like the flour? No? — Nana guards it well, remember that, you naughty, dear cuckoo! *(Laughs cheerfully. From which laughter is the horn motif of VANNIUS. She turns toward the wild roses.)* You, my dear little roses, don't be angry with me! The naughty cuckoo stole your greeting from me. And how you smell! Yes, that is your speech, telling me that you love me.

(The sun rises and floods the scene with a rosy glow. The wild roses seem to glow.)

How you blush! — That is Fraya's blood! I almost feel sad! — *(Thoughtfully.)* Yes, yes, that's how it was. The heavenly beings sent Zeizzo, the beautiful one, to the humans; he was to teach them this song so that they

would be happy again, as the good gods are. — I don't understand how anyone could forget to be happy on this beautiful earth. — But yes, that's how it was. The envious dwarves beat dear Zeizzo to death. And then the lovely Fraya searched for him, running through the hedges, and the thorns cut her skin until it bled, and that is why the white roses are so red, as you are now (*sighs*). The lovely Fraya searched for her Zeizzo, and Nana also searched for hers (*sings the horn motif*) — for twelve moons! Back then, oh! Back then you were also blood red, my dear roses — but it was Roman blood! How terrible! Here lay the slain. Wolves and vultures fought over their gruesome inheritance! (*shudders*). How I dreaded my beloved rose garden. Then I got a grave-spade from Master Wittig and buried them with you! — They thank me, the dead men, through you! How fresh and lush you bloom, how sweet you smell —

(The cry of a golden eagle can be heard. NANA shudders. The birds that had been fluttering around her flee with loud cries, as does the deer. She is alone.)

Is that his call? (*The eagle's cry is repeated.*) Is it him? My Zeizzo! Fraya? (*Listens anxiously; the cry is repeated for the third time. Jubilantly.*) Fraya, thank you! It is him!

(The horn motif of VANNIUS resounds loudly in the air. Then NANA stands there waiting, her hand pressed to her

heart. All the sounds of nature have fallen silent, only the forest continues to rustle.)

VANNIUS (*with crown and purple cloak, coming from the left, appears between the rose bushes, transfigured by the rosy early sunbeam, joyful*): At last I find you again! My dear, sweet Nana! (*Hurries toward her with arms outstretched.*) Nana. my sweetheart!

NANA (*rushing toward him joyfully*): There you are, you troublemaker! How you frightened me and my little friends! They have all fled in terror and fled from your terrible appearance!

VANNIUS: Fled from me? Who are they, your little friends?

NANA: Why, who else but deer and squirrels, woodpeckers and blackbirds, and the other forest birds. Yes, and I would soon have fled too, for the little birds warned me and called more and more urgently: (*imitating the birds' voices*) Come with us! Come with us! Come with us!

VANNIUS: And yet you did not flee! How that pleases me!

NANA (*mischievously*): That is the evil spell that snakes use to bewitch a little bird so that it can never flee.

VANNIUS: That's right, my lovely forest bird, I won't let you go either, for you are mine!

NANA: You say I am yours! (*Flying jubilantly to his neck, but suddenly, before the kiss and embrace, she recoils, frightened, almost soundless.*) How foolish! That cannot be! You, a rich king — I, a poor forest child. (*Bursts into sobs, hands before her face.*) It cannot be! (*Runs to the right, wringing her hands.*) It cannot be!

VANNIUS (*catches her and stops her*): Who could stop me if I want you?

NANA (*sadly determined*): I! I myself! (*Resigned.*) Look, my proud king; I live here in the forest, and it speaks to me and advises me, and I do what it says. (*Fights back her tears.*)

VANNIUS (*holding her hand, with heartfelt sympathy*): And what does your forest say to you, what does it advise?

NANA: It says that only like things belong together, and never the black leaf, the robin, not even the queen nightingale can follow the golden eagle to his nest. How could I follow the rich king to his proud castle? (*Suppressing her tears with difficulty.*) There your men would mock me, and the people would point at me and say, “Look, the King's forest bride, a bundle of dry leaves, that was her entire dowry!” (*Bursts into sobs.*) Go, my king, find yourself a bride who will bring you a bundle of gold, find yourself a proud eagle — Let the robins remain in the bush, in their rose garden. (*Sobs painfully.*)

VANNIUS: What evil spirit torments you so? Who told you, my child, that you were a robin and not an eagle?

NANA (*smiling through her tears*): You mean — me? An eagle?

VANNIUS: Ask your forest, and it will tell you that only an eagle can express such lofty feelings as you, my sweetheart. And did you not say yourself that it was a golden eagle that led you to where my royal jewels were hidden? If you were the robin redbreast you dream yourself to be, no eagle would have entrusted you with such a thing. You can believe that.

NANA (*hopeful, more confident*): Yes, my king, so it might be true. But still, if only I were the forest bride with the dry leaves —

VANNIUS: Who can turn herself into gold, as some old tales tell us. — You almost remind me of Sleeping Beauty; how this rose hedge resembles her enchanted kingdom! You do not know who your father and mother are, you only know that you are not a child of Halgadom. The riddle is not yet solved, so do not despair. And even if I am mistaken, and you are really only the forest bride, King Vannius is rich enough to turn the withered leaves into gold and sparkling gems. He wants only you, child, only you, his most precious carnelian, which he will then set in rich gold to keep as the most noble crown jewel. (*He draws her to his breast, she resists gently.*) Little forest bird, remember

this: if a golden eagle catches you, he will never let you go! (*He embraces and kisses her.*) My dear Nana my dear, sweet queen! (*They hold each other tightly.*)

NANA (*in his arms, blissful*): Vannius! My beloved!

(*The birds fly in chirping and circle around the couple.*)

NANA (*cheering to the birds*): The forest birds will hold a wedding; a golden eagle is fetching his forest bride!

(*Bright birdsong, NANA trills the horn motif in unrestrained joy among the birdsong. Heartfelt embrace.*)

VANNIUS (*gently releasing her with a kiss*): Yes, my lovely Nana, King Vannius wants to fetch his forest bride, and right now, this very moment!

NANA (*joyfully startled*): Right now? But I must — our Haag-Idis —

VANNIUS: Ask her, you mean? No, child, it is the King's will!

NANA (*tenderly and earnestly*): My golden eagle, listen! The forest bird has become an eagle and now recognizes only the call of the golden eagle as its sole law. But the good barn owl was the forest bird's shield and protector when it was still unknown to her that she was an eagle, when her young wings were still too weak to fly high to the noble nest. Therefore, my proud golden eagle, grant the little forest bird its last flight to the nest of the good barn owl, who was her

mother, to thank her for all her love and loyalty, to greet all his dear playmates who shared the nest with her. Will you grant your forest bird the fulfillment of this request, proud golden eagle?

VANNIUS: How could I deny you, my sweetheart, what is also my most sacred duty? Tell the noble Haag-Idis how I want to thank her for all the good she has done for you. Go, my child, I will wait for you here. (Embraces her.) But do not stay too long!

NANA (*gently extricating herself from his embrace*): Dear golden eagle, I will soon be back with you, never to leave you again. (Runs off, *trilling the horn motif joyfully*.)

VANNIUS (*watches her for a long time, then raises his horn to his mouth and lets his call ring out*.)

KADOLD (*with some QUADI, VANGIO, SIDO, and SINTOLD coming from the left*): My king?

VANNIUS: Is everything taken care of, my faithful marshal?

KADOLD: Everything, my king, except for —

VANNIUS (*hesitates*): Except for?

KADOLD: My king, you know Wittig, the blacksmith's stubborn mind. He is as loyal as gold, but as stubborn as a wild horse that has had a bit forced into its mouth for the first time.

VANNIUS: What are you hiding from me, Marshal?

KADOLD: My king, do not be angry with the old man,

VANNIUS: I know, your stable brother. But I am king, and by Wuotan's wrath! Speak the truth, Marshal

KADOLD: Don't take it so badly, my king, but he is —

VANNIUS: Speak! — But what?

KADOLD: I don't know why, my king, but old Wittig laughed so strangely whenever I urged him to forge the little crown for your future wife the Queen, and he never forged it. — So it's said.

VANGIO: He refused to forge the little crown?

SIDO (*to VANNIUS*): You must not tolerate this insult, cousin King!

VANNIUS (*furrowing his brow, but then finding himself; quietly to himself*): He laughs so strangely? Why? There are other reasons than insult; I know the old man. (*Loudly, cautiously.*) So he does not want to forge it, Marshal — and why not?

KADOLD: He says it would be unnecessary, that the Queen does not need his little crown.

VANNIUS (*thinking*): Is that so? Call the smith!

KADOLD: My king, do not punish him too harshly.

VANGIO: He who scorns the King's command shall die!

SIDO: Lay his treacherous skull at his feet!

VANNIUS: Silence! As king, I am judge, not avenger!

First I must hear what he has to say. (*To a QUADI.*)

Call me the smith, Sintold. — (*He exits left.*) Marshal, report further. Have the messengers arrived?

KADOLD: Yes, my king, with favorable news. The ramparts at Marache ¹⁾ are ready for burning. Down below, on the Danube, the Romans are watching with a wary eye, over there in Carnunt, as well as in Vindobona. A delegation, they say, is to be sent to you by the Roman Caesar.

VANNIUS: Only a delegation? (*Thinks.*)

VANGIO (*quietly to SIDO*): Will that be enough to warm him up?

SIDO: Who knows? If our cousin is wise, then we need not fear them.

VANGIO: If!

SIDO: War is very unwelcome to the Romans at present, and therefore a favorable treaty is the best solution.

VANGIO: Our cousin will do otherwise.

SIDO: To his detriment. — You will see!

1) Today the March.

VANNIUS (*awakening from his thoughts*): Only an embassy? Good, then I want war! Marshal! I will send the messengers back, and immediately begin burning the ramparts.

KADOLD: My king! Consider that a bonfire will provoke the Romans —

VANNIUS: That is precisely my intention. The messengers shall ride.

VANGIO: Cousin King, let us advise you —

SIDO: Let the envoys come, hear them and then —

VANNIUS: Leave it! What do I care about Rome? Am I the King of the Quadi or the governor of Tiberius?

VANGIO: Yes, but —

VANNIUS: North of the Danube, I am the lord and will defend my lord's right.

ALL: Hail Vannius! Down with Tiberius!

VANNIUS (*to KADOLD*): Marshal! The messengers must ride, immediately! Tomorrow the ramparts must burn!

(*KADOLD gives orders to a Quadi, who goes left.*)

ALL: Hail Vannius! Hail to the King!

(*WITTIG can be heard grumbling behind the scene.*)

WITTIG (*left, behind the scene, scolding*): Why such haste?
— Blast and blue fire! My iron is burning!

VANGIO: Such insolence! You tolerate that and Rome's threats?

VANNIUS: I hear everyone and always do what the situation requires.

WITTIG (*accompanied by SINTOLD, entering from the left, to the King*): Blast and blue fire, King! Here I am — I don't have enough hands to do all what you want, and now this old iron-eater should still be working his beak. What do you want, King, make it short!

VANNIUS: The little crown for my queen, which I ordered to be forged.

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! I had Kadold tell you that old Wittig has neither hands nor hammer left for useless work.

VANNIUS: You call that useless work?

VANGIO: You fool! Your head is no longer firm enough between your shoulders. (*Shouts of protest, KADOLD tries to calm them down, VANNIUS signals for silence.*)

WITTIG (*to the crowd*): Be quiet while this old iron-thresher talks to his king. (*To VANNIUS.*) Blast and blue fire, King! Is it not unnecessary to forge a crown for a queen who doesn't need one?

SIDO: You shall pay for that! —

(Murmurs, VANNIUS commands with a wave of his hand)

VANNIUS: She does not need one?! — What do you mean by that, blacksmith? Guard your tongue!

WITTIG: Understand this, my king — someone other than old Wittig! You already have a crown, could you possibly need a second one? Does your queen have two heads that she needs two little crowns? *(Murmurs of astonishment.)*

VANNIUS *(astonished)*: Blacksmith, what are you saying here? Make sense of your words!

WITTIG: This old iron-eater says it clearly enough, King, that your queen does not need a second little crown, because one already adorns her proud head! *(Cries of astonishment.)*

VANNIUS *(confused)*: I don't understand you. My forest bride — ?

WITTIG: Don't you know, my king? She has a crown made of ancient, sacred Voland gold, more precious than any other in the world. *(The astonishment grows.)* Yes, now everything is clear to this old iron-eater! — You didn't know that, my king! *(He is startled and covers his mouth.)* You've talked yourself into trouble, you old chatterbox. *(Everyone looks in astonishment at the blacksmith and the King.)*

VANNIUS (*urgently*): Just say it, what do you know about Nana. Speak! Solve the riddle.

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! Stories! — Ask the forest woman, King. What does it concern me, an old iron-smith! (*Mumbles unintelligible words into his beard and turns away grumpily.*)

VANNIUS: Then solve the riddle completely, since you have half revealed it.

WITTIG: That will never happen.

VANNIUS: Does Nana know the secret?

WITTIG: She knows as much as you knew before; she barely suspects it. Only two know, the old forest woman and old Wittig; but he will now remain silent, for he would rather bear the wrath of Wuotan and all the Aesir than the vengeance of an angry woman!

VANNIUS: What could she want to avenge?

WITTIG: Ask her yourself. Old Wittig is a woman-hater; he hates old women like evil cats and resents young ones because they become as old, ugly, and evil as the others once their time has come. (*Grunts into his beard. Everyone laughs.*) Laugh, laugh! This old iron-beater knows better! He would rather have to deal with five starving bears than with an old woman, and he can defeat ten werewolves more easily than a woman who still needs thirty years to grow old. Blue

fire, I know what! (*Mumbles incomprehensible words grimly into his beard, then loudly to the King, drowning out the general laughter.*) Give me leave, King, or my iron will burn out.

VANNIUS: Let it burn out! Give me your answer, or my soul will burn with thirst for knowledge like your iron.

WITTIG: Old Wittig will say nothing; but ask your royal cloak; once this purple was folded around the shoulders of the father of your forest bride. Your helmet covered his head, your shield protected him, and his good sword, which glints there at your side, has sent many a Roman to Hel. What more do you want to know, proud king?

VANNIUS (*urgently*): The drinker grows ever thirstier with each new horn, and the more you entangle me with riddles, the more I want to know. Tell me the name and nature of the king's child who does not know herself. Tell me, blacksmith. I, your king, beg of you.

(*A horn call is heard in the distance, coming from the left; expectant peering. VANNIUS answers with his horn.*)

WITTIG: Pay attention, my king, to what is coming; it may be more important to you than what you want to learn from me. But remember, King, old Wittig gives you good advice. Do not ask from women if you want to know the truth. They will gladly give you the secret

if they believe that you do not desire to conceal it. But the more you show that you want to understand, the more they will conceal it. Blast and blue fire! These evil cats always do what what we men don't want. (*Laughter; contemptuous.*) Just once, like this old iron-worker, help light eighty solstice fires, and you will think the same way, you (*growls incomprehensible words again. Laughter*).

(A *horn signal can be heard approaching. The laughter dies. SIDO hurries off to the left to look. KADOLD follows him, with a suspicious, cautionary gesture.*)

VANGIO (*peering to the left*): Cousin King! Look there! They are riding! They must have important news to announce! I'm already afraid —

WITTIG (*contemptuously*): — that the hares have rebelled and stolen the royal stag's antlers! Blast and blue fire, boy — fear! Fear!? A madman. He thinks the Romans have invaded the country.

ALL: Yes, it could be —

VANNIUS: That wouldn't be so bad, Quadi! Wouldn't we save ourselves the trouble of marching against them for so many days?

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire, King! Those were a king's words!

VANGIO: Tiberius is plotting revenge for the capture of the Legate and the others.

VANNIUS: I needed them to build fortresses, and I am glad to see that he is sending me more such castle builders.

WITTIG: Hail to you, King!

ALL: Hail! Hail!

VANGIO: I only advised caution out of loyalty! (*pretending to be offended*) Let the swords speak, and you shall see that Vangio does not sleep in fear!

WITTIG: Your warning came at the wrong time, boy, and it is contrary to all heroic spirit!

A QUADI: Here comes the messenger.

(*From the left enters the Messenger with KADOLD and SIDO.*)

RANDMAR: Greetings, my king!

VANNIUS: Welcome, Randmar. What is your mission?

RANDMAR: My king, what a ride! By Odhr's errand! No one could follow me! Even with such haste! Hear, my king! The walls of Stilifrieda are finished; seven men high, and surrounding an area so wide and large that all your armies can be sheltered within them —

VANNIUS: I know that, brave Randmar; I marked the boundaries myself. What else?

RANDMAR: You said, King, that these walls were to be burned red from the outside by mighty fires to make them as durable as rock. A forest of wood had already been piled up around them, waiting for the torch that would set it ablaze into a giant conflagration such as this old earth has never seen before.

VANNIUS: Yes, and — ?

RANDMAR: You ordered that the setting of the fire be delayed until the next solstice, in order to turn the victorious gods' protection toward the work.

VANNIUS: My messenger is already riding to instruct the burgrave otherwise. — And now?

RANDMAR: He is too late.

ALL: Too late? — Why?

RANDMAR: Because the ramparts are burning.

ALL: They are burning!?

VANGIO: That increases the danger!

(Commotion, shouting.)

VANNIUS: I command silence! Aistmuth will know why he did this. Speak, my Randmar.

RANDMAR: Over there in Carnunt —

SIDO: So after all! I warned you —

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire, boy, what are you quacking about?

(Murmurs, excited exclamations.)

VANNIUS: I command silence! Continue!

RANDMAR: Yes, that's right, my king. A crowd of Romans came and started to attack and destroy the building. Then the burgrave gathered his men, quickly and decisively lit the high piles of brushwood at all corners, which blazed up like Wafurlohi's sea of fire, in a splendor unmatched by this pair of eyes. "They are now defending themselves!" cried the brave Aistmuth with a wild laugh, and then, in blind fury, he rushed with us toward the bunch of Romans. Soon their ranks wavered, and whoosh! — they were gone, as fast as they could run. We pursued them until the weapons, wagons, horses, and many prisoners were ours.

VANNIUS: That was well done!

WITTIG: Brave Aistmuth!

KADOLD: Keep it up, don't think too long, ask questions, or ponder, just strike wherever you can!

(General outbursts of joy and shouts of "Hail!")

VANGIO: Just wait, they're coming back!

SIDO: Caesar Tiberius is a great and mighty hero king!

KADOLD: Be quiet! Is he your cousin, not our king?
Are we nothing?

(*Murmurs all around.*)

VANNIUS: Listen to the messenger.

KADOLD: Listen!

(*Silence*)

RANDMAR: Now the Romans are gone, the ramparts are still burning, and will probably burn for another week, and glow for a second week. It will be a long time before they are usable. Until then, we will stay in the open field or in the old forest clearings. But we are too few men to protect the work if the Romans should approach with greater force.

VANGIO: You see, cousin King, I told you this in advance! Make treaties, and you —

VANNIUS: By Wuotan's wrath! (*Looks threateningly at VANGIO, who retreats grumbling.*) Let everyone take note! King Vannius will only make treaties with the Roman emperor if he has defeated him first!

WITTING: Blast and blue fire, King, you are growing ever greater! That is how I imagined the Quadi king! Thank you, King, for ennobling your Quadi men with

such trust; they will show you that they are no cowards. (*Loud cheers and applause.*)

VANNIUS: Hear, then, my will!

RANDMAR: Hear the King's word!

(*Silence falls.*)

VANNIUS (*to RANDMAR*): My loyal Randmar! — Ride immediately to my burgrave at Stilifrieda, convey my royal greetings to him, and announce my will: he is to gather as many men as he can. I am sending reinforcements, which are already prepared, and will follow with the army in three weeks. We will arrive before the Romans at Stilifrieda, and from there we will survey the entire Danube valley. Tiberius may come where and when he will, the King of the Quadi is ready to receive him as he deserves.

ALL: Hail to the King!

WITTIG (*looks to the right, then quietly to the King*): By father Voland, King, look there (*points to the right*). Ask no questions, and you will have more than answers; be wise, my king, for those are women who are coming. All-Father Wuotan, protect you from them. (*He withdraws.*)

(*Group waiting expectantly.*)

VANNIUS (*draws his sword joyfully.*) Thank you, my blacksmith, but you may keep your warning for others.

(to RANDMAR.) Ride, my Randmar, ride! You know the message!

RANDMAR: King! I will race with the storm wind so that sparks fly around me like Loki's black fire-stallion! (*Hurries off to the left, as he leaves.*) Hail King Vannius! We will see each other again on the Danube.

ALL: Hail Vannius, hail the King of the Quadi!

(*Joyful movement. From the right, the beating of a large drum can be heard in the following rhythm:*



In between, flute music can be heard. Everyone looks expectantly to the right. Silence falls)

1) The large drum and its ancient beat



which is still common in Austrian military music today belong to the pre-Christian German Halgadom worship. When the God-fearing and salvation-seeking women from the Christian were banished "to the heath" and declared dishonorable, they took their music with them, namely drums, pipes, and violins. Later, the "little people from the heath" traveled through the land as minstrels and traveling artists, reinforced by guarding mercenaries. After Charles V's march to Tunis came the discharged soldiers with their captured Moors ²⁾ and formed wandering families of traveling troupes of artistic horsemen, which still roam Lower Austria and Moravia ³⁾. today.

(Pause for anticipation.)

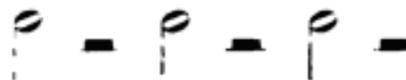
(Seven God-praising men come from the right; the first beats the big drum, two beat small drums, two play the violin, and the last two blow the transverse pipe [flute]. Behind them walk two boys, each carrying a pole of envy; i.e. a lance on which a skeletonized horse skull with flying mane is stuck. Now follows Albruna with a mistletoe wreath and mistletoe belt, supported by the “tame branch” [a hazel stick at chest height, the thick end at the bottom, a fork-shaped branch at the top, in which the thumb rests when walking]. After Albruna comes NANA in royal regalia; a blue gold-embroidered cloak, veil, and on top of this a sparkling diadem. She is followed in a row side by side by GERBERGA, WIEBURGA, and MECHTHILDIS, carrying baskets on their shoulders containing NANA’s treasures. The worshippers take up

- 2) These remnants of the former “little people of the heath” had no place to call home and were only forced to the places where they happened to be staying.
- 3) Most of these traveling troupes can trace their existence back many centuries and traditionally trace their origins to Charles V’s campaign in Tunisia, although they are much older, dating back to pre-Christian times. All of them have retained the large drum and its characteristic beat



have remained their distinctive heritage.

positions on the right, while the bearers of the envy sticks remain in the middle, to the right and left of the three girls. Albruna stands in front of them. In the middle, to her right is NANA, to her left King VANNIUS. Behind him are VANGIO, SIDO, KADOLD and WITTIG, and behind them, along the left the remaining Quadi follow in single file. Flutes, violins, and small drums sound until the formation is complete, then the large drum brings the final beat:



Pause, tense anticipation.)

JUTA: Vannius, King of the Quadi! Greetings in this holy place, which your feet have entered today for the first time since that joyful day when I placed the royal crown on your proud head according to the counsel of Herian. Hail to you!

ALL: Hail, Vannius! Hail to the King!

VANNIUS: To you too, noble Haag-Idis, my royal greeting! I have a request to make of you, All-Beratherin, but if you have one of your own, speak first. Hail to you!

JUTA: King of the Quadi, your request is known to me, but first hear what fate has in store for you, son of the sun, from those who grant wishes. Hear, proud king! You have accomplished great things. You have bravely driven the insolent enemies from the south out of the

land of the Quadi; you have built proud fortresses with your own spades, whose walls rise like mountains to protect and defend, and with love and trust, the Quadi people look up to you, to you who have regained for them the right of lordship that they thought they had lost. Hail to you!

ALL: Hail to the Quadi! Hail to the King!

JUTA: That, proud king, you have done to the land and to the people, but you have also done something greater than you yourself realize. As once in ancient times, in days long past, the sunny Siegfried fought the dragon at the Kriemhildenstein and won the King's daughter, so you, a hero of the sun like Siegfried, have rescued a maiden from dire distress, whom you desire as your bride. You thought her to be poor and of low birth, but her noble spirit overcame all your doubts, love triumphed, and you are determined to make her your queen.

VANNIUS: That is I, noble Allberatherin!

JUTA: Then listen further, great king! You know how the rich King Marbod lost his throne through base envy and treachery, how, seeking help, he followed the enticements of the Romans and fell into their captivity, and died of a broken heart in Ravenna. His faithful master-at-arms —

WITTIG: What are you babbling about, old forest woman? Blast and blue fire, be silent!

(*Murmurs. KADOLD tries to calm the blacksmith, who submits with a growl.*)

JUTA (*continuing*) His faithful master-at-arms Kadmar rescued King Marbod's little daughter, the crown treasure, from a thousand dangers and left his own court, bringing the royal child to my care at Halgadom. She grew up there, and her name is Nana!

NANA: Do I understand correctly? King Marbod, then would be my father? Poor mother, I must mourn you too as dead!

VANNIUS (*approaching NANA*): Nana, my dear forest bride!

NANA (*recovering, smiling through her tears*): My proud golden eagle, you told me: forest birds must become eagles —

JUTA (*stepping between them, gently separating them*): Hear the end! The noble Kadmar faithfully guarded the King's treasures, and I guarded the King's child. Many burdens of gold are still hidden, which Kadmar will bequeath to you as your inheritance. But he shall tell you this himself, my king. I have only King Marbod's daughter Nana to give you; take her.

Nana (*in VANNIUS' arms*): My Vannius!

VANNIUS: Nana. my eagle, my forest bride! (*Embrace; gently loosening himself from NANA's arms; looks around in a circle.*) And the master at arms of King Marbod, the ever-faithful Kadmar?

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! Woman's babble! (*Steps before the king.*) King! That was me, but today I am the blacksmith Wittig and will remain so! — Tell me, King, where I shall have the gold carted to!

ALL: Wittig was Kadmar!?

NANA (*throws her arms around the forest woman*): Dear, good Lady Juta! (*Long embrace.*)

VANNIUS: Kadmar!? The famous valiant warrior!? You, loyal Kadmar, I beg you, remain my guardian!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! King! — I am now Wittig, the blacksmith, and I will remain so! -

VANNIUS: So shall you, my blacksmith, and your skill shall serve the Quadiland well. Therefore, be my guardian. (*Gives him his hand.*)

WITTIG (*taking it*): King, I will do so! The old iron-worker will gladly serve you, because you serve the people! Blast and blue fire, King, I am yours!

VANNIUS: Wittig, my thanks, my blacksmith! Be as loyal to me as you were to King Marbod, and as I am to you! (*Turning to JUTA, who is just letting go of*

NANA.) And you, noble Haag-Idis, how can I thank you?

JUTA: Through your happiness!

NANA (*embracing VANNIUS*): My Vannius! (*In his arms with an expression of deepest emotion.*) So it is really true? It is not a dream? A little forest bird has become an eagle? And the golden eagle's nest (*almost frightened*) — it's not in this familiar hedge?! Nana must now leave it and all the love and goodness that has made her young life here so beautiful! You dear, good little singers of the forest, farewell!

(*The birds come flying, chirping, and circle around the couple.*)

Farewell to you, my woodpecker, my robin! — my sweet nightingale! Yes, your Nana will now be a queen, like you! And you, my dear little finch! Who will take care of you now? Remember your Nana, who will never forget you. (*Bird songs. A blackbird flies in with a wild rose in its beak, which NANA takes.*) Dear little blackbird, your farewell gift! (*With deep emotion, brought to tears.*) I must leave you, for I have become an eagle!

(*The fawn comes and nestles against her.*)

My dear little fawn! You too!? How sweet! — Never again will your faithful starlight shine joyfully towards me in the dawn greeting? Look, my golden eagle is calling, I must follow him. (*She tucks the blackbird's rose*

into her robe and hurries to the rose bushes.) Farewell, my dear roses, take my farewell greeting, may the dear sun protect you!

(A gust of wind shakes the bushes and showers Nana with rose petals.)

You, dear rose hedge! You loved me so much! (*She sinks down in blissful excitement clasping VANNIUS to her breast.*) My Vannius, now I am yours! Sleeping Beauty's enchanted hedge opens its rose gates, I will follow you as your queen.

(Long embrace.)

VANNIUS: Come, my queen!

ALL, Hail! Queen Nana. Hail! Queen of the Quadi!
Hail!

(The birds circle chirping around the couple, who are preparing to leave; the deer runs into the bushes and disappears)

A MESSENGER (*hurriedly*): King of the Quadi — !

(All surprised, stare at the messenger without saying a word)

VANNIUS (*leading NANA by the hand, suddenly*): What is it?

MESSENGER. King! Your wall-guard from Enzenberg sends word that the Romans have crossed the Danube

at Vindobona and are invading the country with an army! Come!

VANGIO: Cousin King! Things are getting worse. I warned you!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! Put on women's clothes and become a mourner. Your wailing is only needed at funeral pyres, you —

VANNIUS: My army is mobilized! Let the beacons burn, send messengers after them, in a week —

NANA (*violently frightened*): My Vannius! (*Clasps him to her breast.*)

WITTIG (*mutters incomprehensible words into his broad white beard*).

VANNIUS (*continuing to speak lovingly to NANA*): In a week, the Quadi will be at the Danube. You, Kadold, lead them there — I will follow with the second army.

NANA (*raising herself up to Vannius, bravely overcoming her pain*): My golden eagle! I am an eagle, not a turtledove! I am Queen of the Quadi!

WITTIG (*staring at NANA in amazement*): Blast and blue fire!

NANA (*amid general astonishment, rising majestically and continuing her speech*): My Vannius, why do you

hesitate? Why do you want to be the last when you should be the first?

VANNIUS (*astonished*): My queen! I did not want to delay, but first I must take you, my royal bride, home to my royal palace! There is a treasure prepared for you there —

NANA (*tenderly but firmly*): My golden eagle! Lead your eagle bride to your nest, then strike as the golden eagle; the first to attack the enemies of your kingdom! — Only one jewel, my proud king, does your queen know; for it she thirsts like the rose for the sun! All other treasures are nothing but empty trinkets to your Nana. This priceless jewel, my Vannius, which is dearest to me above all else, is you yourself! The radiant sparkle of this jewel is your fame and your honor, rich king! — Go forth when honor calls you, to increase the splendor of your proud fame, for I beg nothing else from the heavens than that my priceless jewel may outshine all the suns in the heavens! (*Embraces him.*)

VANNIUS (*torn away, breaks free from NANA's embrace, looking proudly into her eyes*): Nana. Queen! You make me prouder than the bright sun has ever been! (*After a heartfelt embrace.*) Arise! Light the beacons, send messengers to all the districts, in a week King Vannius will face the Romans!

ALL: Hail to you, Queen Nana! Hail! Hail to the Quadi king! Hail!

WITTIIG: Blast and blue fire, Queen! That was heartily brave of you! This old master-at-arms of your father, King Marbod, will now forgive you for not being born a king's son! You are the first woman, Queen, whom this old Hagestalde learned to revere, because you know and also show that you are a queen, not only the Queen of the Quadi, not only the queen of the King, but also the queen over yourself and the woman within you! — Queen, give me your hand!

NANA (*holds out her hand majestically but kindly*): My good blacksmith! Your praise amazes me! Is it really such a great thing that I know what I am and know my duties?

WITTIIG (*kneeling and taking the Queen's hand and kissing it*): Queen! For the first time in his life, this old master-at-arms bows his knee, for the first time he pays homage to a woman! What defeated me and shook me to the point of adoration is your free, proud, noble spirit, which, O Queen! — is evident in your noble bearing and which is the spirit of our Quadi people! Therefore, Queen, I dedicate my sword and my loyalty to you! (*Draws his sword and, still kneeling, holds it out to the Queen.*)

NANA (*takes the sword, kisses it, and returns it to WITTIG*): My faithful master-at-arms, be my sword-bearer and carry my sword with your old loyalty!

WITTIG (*raising his sword*): Queen! So shall it be! One man, one word, one sword! (*to the King*) Hail to you, my king! With such a queen in alliance, you yourself can win the sun's crown!

VANNIUS: Proud eagle queen, come! Tremble, Tiberius!

ALL: Hail Vannius! Hail Nana!

(*The procession forms, the royal couple steps forward.*)

(*The curtain falls.*)

End of the second act.

Third act.

Three months after the second act. The vestibule of the royal court at Eburodunum. A spacious vestibule, at the back an open double door through which one has a view of the mighty earthen rampart. The rampart is burnt red and has a latticework parapet at the top. A ladder-like staircase leads up to top of the rampart. The vestibule is (*barn-like*) timber-framed, but everywhere there are signs of wealth. On the walls are distributed deer antlers, at the ends of which are stuck tall candles, from the walls hang chandeliers, also decorated with candles, weapons and hunting trophies, among them many funeral objects. Above the main entrance and above the other doors are one or more skeletal horse skulls decorated with mistletoe wreaths and mistletoe branches. A particularly large mistletoe wreath hangs under the central chandelier. Rows of benches run around the walls, covered with animal skins. At the front right is a high-backed raised seat on a platform, which is accessed by two steps. The two posts of the high backrest are carved into horse heads. Above the backrest of the raised seat is a space left free for the King's shield and helmet. The self-forged grave spade is laid across the seat. The raised seat has a red cushion and in front of it lies a colorful carpet. To the right and left several doors lead to the side rooms, kitchen, etc., all of which are hung with mighty bearskins; only the one door on the left front, opposite the high seat, is hung with a colorfully woven carpet; it leads to the

living quarters of the royal couple. The gatekeeper paces up and down on the rampart. He is equipped with a halberd and a horn. It is midday.

(MECHTHILDIS, GERBERGA, and WIEBURGA have just finished decorating the hall and are attaching the last oak leaf garlands to the hall door.)

MECHTHILDIS: Today will be a joyous day.

GERBERGA: The good queen, how I envy her.

MECHTHILDIS: Yes, she deserves it! She has not slept a wink for the last few nights, her longing for her dear lord has robbed the poor woman of her sleep, and she has been singing the King's tune which he plays on his horn.

WIEBURGA: But today, when the sweet king of love returns home victorious, today —

MECHTHILDIS: How wonderful it must be to be able to shout out: "Look, the one before whom the Roman emperor trembles, this mighty man, he is my husband!" — Just for one short hour I would like to be queen, in order to — How can anyone dare to do such a thing?

VANGIO *(has cautiously peered through one of the right back doors and waves warningly to the outside. He has overheard MECHTHILDIS' last words and approaches.)*

He embraces her with amorous caresses): Only one hour, my sweetheart? I will grant you that — Come!

MECHTHILDIS (*slips away from him laughing*): You, king's cousin? You would first have to become king and then my king.

VANGIO: All that can still come to pass, my sweetheart.

MECHTHILDIS (*laughing*): You didn't even make it as the Frog Prince (*the girls giggle*).

VANGIO: I'm too hot-blooded for that! (*He tries to grab her*). What would you do with a Frog Prince? Just wait — (*He kisses her quickly, she gives him a slap on the mouth, laughing*). You wildcat, just wait! You'll see me as king, and then —

MECHTHILDIS (*laughing*): That's why you came home in such a hurry; because there was no king's crown for you in the war. Isn't that right, king's cousin?

GERBERGA (*laughing*): Hero Vangio waits until a king's crown grows on a bean stalk!

MECHTHILDIS: Yes, yes, little cousin. There your queen will also blossom for you. (*Laughter from the girls.*)

VANGIO (*has caught MECHTHILDIS and is flirting with her*): Did I come as a fugitive or as the King's messenger, you wicked gossip?

MECHTHILDIS: The King sent you as a messenger because he was only too glad to be without you in the field. — Go, look for a crown and queen by the bean stalk.

VANGIO (*flirtatiously*): Not by the bean stalk, and not (*mockingly*) in the rose hedge like cousin Vannius! — In your little chamber, my heart's delight (*embraces her*), there we will dream a short hour of crown and queen! (*flatteringly*) Come, beautiful queen, come!

MECHTHILDIS (*mocking*): Now, lovely dream-king, I have no time. Later — come later!

VANGIO: Later? When? Where?

MECHTHILDIS (*laughing*): Come later, dream-prince — much later!

VANGIO (*flattering*): Now speak, my sweet love, speak. When? Where?

MECHTHILDIS (*seemingly tenderly*): My lovely dream prince! When the moon limps through the clouds, square as the courtyard gate, then come to where you saw the sun shining at midnight. There I will wait for you longingly! (*She breaks free from him, laughing, amid the giggles of the others, and gives him a light slap on the mouth.*) Farewell, my sweet!

VANGIO (*catches her amid general derision*): I won't have it! Tell me where I can find you —

MECHTHILDIS (*breaks free*): Where the carp sing love songs and the pike blow on the flute! (*Laughter.*)

VANGIO: You wild bumblebee —

(*Cheerful horn sounds and shouts of joy are heard.*)

GERBERGA: They're coming!

WIEBURGA: The King! (*Both hurry through the door to the left.*)

MECHTHILDIS (*runs, still mockingly blowing kisses to VANGIO, through the door to the left, joyfully as she runs in*): Queen! Hurry! They're coming in!

VANGIO (*looking after her*): You witch! (*He leaves angrily through the door by which he entered, but remains peering behind the bearskin that closes it; to himself*): Just wait, cousin King! I'll get the crown, but not from the bean stalk!

NANA (*coming out with MECHTHILDIS*): He's coming, my Vannius! Victorious father Wuotan, thank you! Vannius, my king! (*Hurries through the door to the left, followed by MECHTHILDIS.*)

VANGIO (*mocking from behind the bearskin*): Greet my cousin for me, you wild royal foundling! (*Calls back into the chamber:*) Come, Legate! The time is right for your escape!

(*PETRONIUS and SIDO slip cautiously out from under the bearskin and peek in. PETRONIUS is wearing his Roman clothing, which appears to be very worn; a rope around his neck as a sign of his servitude, as well as iron shackles around his wrists and ankles, but without chains.*)

VANGIO (*continuing his speech*): The unfortunate war has thwarted all my efforts!

PETRONIUS: The unfortunate war!? My prince, you know Rome poorly! — It was wise moderation on the part of Emperor Tiberius that he remained seemingly defeated, in order to lull King Vannius and then crush him all the more devastatingly! — By victorious Mars! Now, of course, the emperor gives the impression that peace is what he desires, but Rome will actually seek peace only when it can rely on the loyalty of the Quadi king. You will only recognize this as true, my prince, when I have delivered your message to my emperor. But remember this: if my emperor had wished it, his legions would now be standing within these walls! Do not misunderstand the wise restraint of the sublime Caesar, prince, nor my friendship toward you!

VANGIO: I appreciate that better than my arrogant cousin, King Vannius. I will prove it to you, my dear friend.

PETRONIUS: You will not regret it! Rome knows how to show gratitude.

VANGIO: Good. — Come, let us flee. The time seems favorable for that. Listen — you know, my friend, when my cousin was proposing, news came that your legions had crossed the Danube at Vindobona. Faster than I could think, his army was already on its feet and forced your commander to retreat quickly. My cousin, the King, had interrupted all the festivities that usually accompany a wedding. Now, transfigured by victory, he wants to celebrate them with excessive pomp. Since he is not as vigilant as is his nature, nor are his men, I will give you your freedom today and your brave centurion Marinius with you.

PETRONIUS: My godlike prince, how can I ever thank you for such generosity? Ask for whatever you want, I will grant you everything now in Caesar's name!

SIDO (*pushing forward, anxiously*): My dear legate, what we demand, what we must demand, is the certainty that no one will ever find out that it was we who helped you escape, whether it succeeds or not. Consider, Legate, that my brother and I can still be of use to you if no suspicion falls on us, but that we would be lost if —

PETRONIUS: Illustrious one! How can you even say such a thing? Even if I were captured a second time and they wanted to torture me day and night, and night and day, yes — if they tore my limbs from my body, I would remain silent like the noble horse that

cannot utter a cry of pain. I swear this to you, my benefactor, by Hercules! But why should our escape not succeed? The liburna is ready, we will row with the current that carries us straight to Carnuntum. Neptune will not forsake us. (*To VANGIO.*) So speak, my prince, what do you demand for my freedom and that of my Centurion Marinius?

VANGIO: Rome's help in driving away my loathsome cousin, Rome's help in obtaining the crown of the Quadi, Rome's help in maintaining this crown permanently.

PETRONIUS: These wishes shall be granted you, my prince. But what do you offer in return to my gracious emperor?

VANGIO: Loyalty, obedience, and military service, for Rome's enemies are mine, and your friends shall also be those of the Quadi.

PETRONIUS: My noble prince! I will do what I can. Gratitude toward you and your noble brother will make my tongue as smooth as that of Cicero, but —

VANGIO: But — ?

PETRONIUS: But Caesar Tiberius!? That will not be enough for him.

VANGIO: What more does your emperor want?

PETRONIUS: Tribute in crops and the like, as well as permanent residences for the auxiliary army, adapted to the needs of our people.

VANGIO: Hm?

PETRONIUS: Leave that, noble princes. I will enforce what I can. The gratitude —

SIDO (*to PETRONIUS*): And what will you grant me? My brother will receive the crown and I — ?

PETRONIUS (*lurking*): That will be decided, dear prince; I mean, you can cooperate or you can divide the kingdom, so that each will be king; one here, the other there,

SIDO (*to himself*): That would be worth considering. Why should I not be king? Why only my brother?

VANGIO (*to himself*): Snake! — I will not let Petronius leave; before he does, I alone must be king. (*Loudly*.) My dear legate. It remains as we decided. Rome secures me the crown, an auxiliary army and its protection; I grant the demanded tribute, the fortified armories for the soldiers of Rome and military assistance whenever it is requested of me. If you swear to give this, I will let you go. Will you swear this to me?

PETRONIUS: My dear prince, how gladly! It is what I wish for you with all my heart, not only as a debt of gratitude, but also out of friendship!

SIDO (*secretly to PETRONIUS*): My legate, don't betray me —

PETRONIUS (*likewise to SIDO*): Illustrious prince! I know what I owe you, I will help you to wear the crown alone. Let me do it; trust me. But be careful not to arouse your brother's mistrust! (*To both.*) But help me now, before time runs out.

VANGIO: Do you swear, Legate?

PETRONIUS: By Hercules! The crown of Quadiland is yours!

VANGIO (*quietly to PETRONIUS*): Mine, mine alone!

SIDO (*likewise*): You understand, Legate, it falls to me

PETRONIUS (*nodding to each individually, double-meaning*): I swear it to you, dear princes, your conditions will be fulfilled by my gracious Emperor. But now —

VANGIO (*in a subdued voice*): Yes, yes, otherwise the favorable opportunity will pass. My cousin has given you to the Queen as a house slave, and it is difficult to get you out of the siege of Eburodun. You must pretend that the Queen wanted to punish you and sent you to hard labor building the ramparts down

there by the river. You will beg me not to allow it, but I will force you to, and have one of the King's men carry you down. Resist as much as you can; I will be strict and finally chase you out of the gate. You must forgive me, dear legate, we must now deceive the people on the ramparts.

PETRONIUS (*likewise*): I know, I know, and I will do whatever your wisdom, my prince, deems necessary.

VANGIO (*goes to the gate and calls out*): Rolf! Rolf!

ROLF (*rushes over hastily*): What do you need, sir?

VANGIO: Get this importunate fellow off my back! (*to PETRONIUS.*) Get out, you lazy good-for-nothing! Remember this! The King ordered you to help drive the stakes into the ground down by the river with the other men. No begging and no pleading! Get out!

SIDO (*likewise*): You insolent man! (*Pretends to push the Legate out, whispers in his ear.*) Legate, I am counting on you! But quickly into

PETRONIUS (*whispering quickly to SIDO*): Prince, be assured! (*Loudly, seemingly pleading.*) My austere lords! I am so ill, so weak —

VANGIO: Get on with it, you frog! (*To ROLF*) You, Rolf, fetch Marinius as the King commands! And take both of them down to the Schwarzache ¹⁾. There they

shall help drive the stakes into the ground for the new fortifications. Hurry! Go!

PETRONIUS (*as before*): Most gracious lord, have pity — Mercy!

VANGIO (*in feigned anger, to deceive ROLF, tears a short javelin from the wall, takes it by the pry bar and pretends to want to strike PETRONIUS with the reverse end of the spear shaft.*) Will you go now, you —

ROLF (*grabs PETRONIUS by the neck and pushes him roughly through the gate with a shove*): Wait there, you beggar, you'll get what's coming to you. (*Outside calling loudly.*) Marinius, quickly!

MARINIUS (*outside*): Who's calling?

ROLF: Quick, quick! Don't ask questions

(*MARINIUS comes and is led away by ROLF to the left.*)

PETRONIUS (*calling to the two brothers from outside as a hidden farewell*): My princes, Hercules, hear my oath!

VANGIO (*has watched SIDO and the departing men, steps back into the hall and fastens the javelin to the wall*): So that is in progress; may it succeed. (*Looking suspiciously at SIDO from the side.*) What can my brother be thinking?

1) Today's Schwarzawa.

SIDO: Brother Vangio —

VANGIO: Well?

SIDO: It would have worked, but now we are captured.

VANGIO: Why?

SIDO: The game is getting serious. I am seized by a horror! Heads are the price. There is no way out. There is a crown at stake, but two heads —

VANGIO: Are you only realizing that now?

SIDO: What next? There is no way back.

VANGIO: Recruit followers.

SIDO: But how?

VANGIO: Birdlime won't work, of course.

SIDO: I would know where to find the right birdlime if only Wittig, that rude hulk, weren't sitting so widely on my cousin's treasure chest.

VANGIO: Do as the Roman did, you big child, be as clever as the Legate.

SIDO: Like the Roman?

VANGIO: Yes, like the Legate; just so. What did the poor croaking frog call his own? The rope around his neck wasn't even his, and yet we gave him his freedom. Why, dear brother? Why?

SIDO: Well, didn't he promise to help us?

VANGIO: You see, little brother, you fool, he promised!

That's cheap, because you don't need treasures to make promises. Leave the clumsy blacksmith sitting on your cousin's chest alone, let him save, let him be stingy, and think: he's saving for us!

SIDO: Are you serious?

VANGIO: But what else? Promise everyone everything, the more unfulfillable you promise, the better it works; that's the right birdlime for this stupid world.

SIDO: No one will believe me without the golden seeds in my hands.

VANGIO: No? (*Laughs.*) Promise the cowherd he'll be a burgrave, the field guard the Marshal's dignity, the farmhand that he'll strut around like a duke, and the Marshal himself you can boldly promise so much gold that he couldn't cart it home in four weeks with four horses! Promise! Promise! Promise!

SIDO: Brother! My head is spinning! What if they remind me of my promise and demand their reward?

VANGIO: Are you afraid of keeping your word, you fool? Greed for possessions blinds everyone, so promise them the sun and the moon — they will believe you and run through fire for you in their rage; they will believe the most blatant lies, but they will laugh at you

and mock you and abandon you if you are stupid enough to say a word that corresponds to the truth.

SIDO: And when they finally demand it?

VANGIO: You promise again and in doing so rise ever higher in power and wealth.

SIDO: But eventually their demands will become threats, and threats will become deeds.

VANGIO: For such cases, keep gallows ropes, executioner's axes, wheels, and pyres ready!

SIDO: And you really mean that?

VANGIO: Really! I learned this from the Romans; it is infallible!

SIDO: King Vannius is finished; King Vangio will be victorious!

VANGIO: Yes, he will, just as Hagen defeated Siegfried! Until the end of time, singers shall proclaim King Vangio's victory, and his glory shall endure until our rotten earth breaks into pieces!

(Cheerful horn blasts and the jubilation of the people can be heard nearby.)

VANGIO *(laughing enviously)*: Rejoice, you curse-bringers! Soon you will be howling your sacred cries to King Vangio! *(To SIDO.)* Come! — I don't want to meet my cousin and his wild bird yet. Come!

SIDO: She looks like an eagle, this mist-covered crow! I feel dizzy!

(Both exit through a door on the right. Amidst the cheers of the people and the sound of horns, King VANNIUS enters from the left through the hall gate, leading NANA by the hand, followed by WITTIG, KADOLD, RANDMAR, SINTOLD, the King's guard and armed Quadi, some among them carrying Roman legion standards and other pieces of booty, as well as MECHTHILDIS, GERBERGA, WIEBURGA, and other maidens of the Queen.)

NANA: So you are mine again! Thanks be to you, Queen Fraya, and also to you, victorious father Wuotan! My proud treasure shines in the sunniest carnelian glow of glory, my sweet king of love enters his hall as a proud victorious king, he returns, a sun god radiant with victory, and his priestess greets him with joyful cheers!

(Embraces him passionately.)

VANNIUS: Now the dear sun shines upon me again, hidden behind clouds of battle, shining for my victory! Nana, now you are mine again!

NANA: My sword bearer and king's guardian, bring the crown and the cloak! *(To the King.)* Give me the helmet and the shield!

(As WITTIG exits to the right, NANA lifts the helmet from the King's head the helmet from his head and takes his shield from him.)

VANNIUS: My little Nana! One day you must become my Valkyrie! How proudly my battle shield adorns you!

NANA: Do not awaken shadows on such a joyful day! To think of that *(with a slight shudder)* — it will come soon enough.

VANNIUS *(kissing her)*: First comes life *(kisses her again)*.

NANA: — That Nana will make beautiful for you, as far as fate allows her! *(Breaks free from his arms and hangs the shield over the back of the high seat.)* Thank you, my good shield, for your protection of him! *(Hangs the helmet over it, which KADOLD helps her to do.)* My good helmet, remind everyone who sees you here of the terror that seized our enemies when my Vannius's sunny eye saw you and his voice thundered calling destruction upon the enemy!

(WITTIG brings the crown and cloak. NANA takes the cloak and places it around the King's shoulders.)

So adorn yourself with the garment of peace, my king, and in it heal all the wounds that the sword has inflicted. *(Places the crown on his head.)* And may the rays of glory shine around your victorious head, the

royal sun glowing after the storm of battle, to bestow happiness and blessings upon his people!

(*VANNIUS stands before the high seat. NANA bows one knee before him.*)

Sun king, your priestess —

VANNIUS (*raising her to him*): My goddess! (*Embraces her.*)

ALL: Hail to the King! Hail to Queen Nana!

(*VANNIUS takes the grave spade like a scepter and sits with NANA [he on the right, she on the left] on the high seat. WITTIG stands on the left, KADOLD on the right next to them on the top step.*)

VANNIUS: My dear and faithful ones! A lindworm came from the banks of the Tiber into the land of the Quadi, seemingly invincible beneath its iron scales, but it has been driven away, and we have brought back rich treasures of gold from his lair, which he calls Vindobona. The spoils of victory have been divided, and each of you, my loved ones and loyal followers, return home to your estates laden with riches. But before you depart, be my guests here at Eburodun, for it shall end more gloriously than it began, my wedding feast, which the war so suddenly interrupted.

ALL: Hail to the Queen!

KADOLD: Proud victorious king! Before we proceed to the feast, let your high seat be decorated with the proud signs of victory, so that the envoys of Rome may tremble when they approach, and others may find a warning example in it.

VANNIUS: Do so, my marshal. (Some Quadi fasten the trophies behind the high seat.

WITTIG: My king! Now you sit again at home in your palace. What you wanted, I have now accomplished. (*He pulls a gold coin from his robe and hands it to the King.*) Look, King, your image! This must tell of your glory and my art even on the last day before the world passes away! Blast and blue fire, King! No Quadi eye has ever seen the like!

(*All crowd curiously closer.*)

VANNIUS: Master of all masters! Are you a god who can shape men?

NANA: My Vannius! It is you, as you breathe, think, and speak — !

VANNIUS (*embracing her*): — And kiss!

WITTIG (*smiling smugly, pulling from his robe a golden necklace made of VANNIUS guilders*): Blast and blue fire, King, spare your astonishment until the end! Look at this jewelry for your queen! The necklace of Fraya could not shine more brightly. You must allow

me to give it to you for your queen. Your image, my king, shall be your queen's breast ornament. (*He hands the necklace to the King; general astonishment.*)

VANNIUS: How wonderfully beautiful! You are the master of all masters; even the famous Voland could not have forged anything better.

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire, King, I am satisfied with myself.

NANA: Sword bearer! You could not have offered me a more precious or more valuable gift. My shining sun jewel! Fraya! Fraya! You shower me with joy!

VANNIUS (*hangs the jewelry around NANA's neck*): It is the jewel I wanted to offer you, dear Nana. back when the Roman disrupted our wedding, back when you made me so happy! (*Embraces her, NANA looks up at him blissfully.*)

(*Music is heard, large and small drums, violins and pipes, as well as the cheers of the people behind the scene.*)

KADOLD: My king! The citizens of Eburodun

VANNIUS: My Eburoduners!?

RANDMAR: Yes, King, they come to honor your queen!

VANNIUS: The city that is most dear to me; I welcome it with all my heart!

(In the hall door, coming from the right, two standard-bearers become visible, carrying the envy poles [skeletal horse skulls with manes]; these are followed by the musicians and them by the Eburoduner Burgrave RUMOLD with the townspeople of Eburodun. The procession is brought up by people of both sexes. They circle the stage. The musicians stand back to the right of the gate, RUMOLD with the city councilors remain in the middle between the envy pole bearers, the people fill the background.)

ALL: Hail to the King! Hail to Nana, the Queen!

(The music stops.)

VANNIUS: Heartfelt welcome to you, dear and loyal people of Eburodun!

RUMOLD: We men and people of Eburodun, we have come to tell you what is in our hearts. We were not willing at first, we were forced to take the spades you forged into our hands, and grumbling, we dug and threw up the ramparts, because we could not understand what use they would be to us! Now they stand like heavenly castles thanks to this grave tool, which I would kiss! — King! The Romans wanted to prevent the proud construction, but behind the ramparts you gathered your armies and threw the Romans back across the Danube, so that Eburodun felt as safe in the midst of war as in the deepest peace. We now recognize how well-advised you are in your

concern for us, and we will follow you inevitably to the death!

VANNIUS: I could not hear anything more pleasing, brave Rumold; but bring your business to pass.

RUMOLD: Hail, King, to you and your wife the Queen! Now let me make a request.

VANNIUS: Speak — it shall be granted if I can and may fulfill it.

RUMOLD: You have given us, King, a dear Queen, and we would ask you to allow us to honor her in our own way. Outside in the courtyard stand twelve white cows, a white stallion and many other fine pieces of livestock that would adorn even the richest estate. We wish to give them to the Queen to show you, King, how we honor your queen.

VANNIUS: I gladly grant you, my dear and loyal subjects, what you ask, and invite you to a joyful wedding celebration today in my royal court. But as an eternal reminder of this joyful day, my brave Rumold, take this coin; no eye in Quadiland has ever seen such a thing before. (*He hands Rumold a gold coin, which he admires in amazement. To WITTIG.*) My dearest treasure keeper, give each of my loyal Eburoduners just such a gold coin from the King's treasury.

(*WITTIG exits through one of the side doors on the right.*)

RUMOLD (*showing the coin and turning it over and over*):

King! This round gold piece bears your likeness. — How am I to interpret this? You, King, call it a coin. This coin is round like a rolling wheel; it shines like the sun, from whose rays you shine back at me, and everything it says is true and faithful, for it is good, heavy, genuine gold! — So let it roll as your chariot of glory, you proud victorious king, and it shall bear witness of you and your deeds to all peoples and all ages. It shall make them happy like the sun makes the whole world happy, and like you make the Quadi happy — for, wealthy king, through these Vannius guilders you are establishing the wealth of your people, which may grow unhindered until the end of time! Hail, Vannius, to you!

ALL: Hail! Vannius!

(*WITTIG comes from behind on the right, followed by RAFFO and HANGO, who are carrying a cauldron filled to the brim with gold guilders, and place this cauldron in front of the royal couple on the highest step.*)

WITTIG: King! Here are the Vannius guilders, counted out, one for each courtier!

VANNIUS: My valiant burgrave! Take this treasure for my dear Eburoduners, and distribute it as I have determined. Learn to make good use of the gold as coin, and it will be a blessing for the land and the people — but may the masters of fate protect you

keep you from misjudging the value of the coin for this would turn the blessing into a curse!

RUMOLD: King! You make us rich! May Wuotan, the granter of wishes, hear your blessing, and avert disaster. (*He hands the cauldron to two city guards. The Eburoduners crowd around, RUMOLD distributes the coins.*) Hail to you, treasure giver!

ALL: Hail to the King!

VANNIUS: Now let the words rest, let the flutes and violins invite us to dance! Let the festival begin!

(*Amid general cheering, the music begins. The wall guard blows his horn. The music suddenly stops. General tension.*)

WITTING: Blast and blue fire! Wall guard, what is going on?

RANDMAR (*has rushed to the rampart and is calling down from there:*) King! It looks like a flight!

KADOLD: Roman murder and arson!

VANNIUS: Flight!? — Who flees!?

RANDMAR (*from the rampart*): Petronius and Marinus! They have stolen your wicker boat, King, and are rowing down the river.

KADOLD: Roman murder and arson! Follow them!

VANNIUS: Randmar and Sintold! Take capable horsemen and hunt down those fellows! Ten Vannius guilders for each of them, dead or alive!

RANDMAR: We'll catch those fellows for you!

SINTOLD: Hey! A merry chase for twice ten golden King's foxes!

(*RANDMAR and SINTOLD exit.*)

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! How did those fellows get out of the ramparts? (*Movement and unrest.*)

VANNIUS: They belonged to the Queen, didn't they?

KADOLD: Dragons and salamanders! (*calls up*): Rolf! Rolf! (*to the King*) King! Your steward must know, ask him.

ROLF (*comes through the gate from the right*): What are you calling for, Marshal? You know that I don't have enough hands today

KADOLD: Rolf, the King wants to ask you something.

ROLF: Yes, what? My king, I do not know —

VANNIUS: Rolf, you must tell us how the two Romans were able to escape from the city. They were entrusted to your care, as they belonged to the Queen. I must reprimand you, Rolf!

ROLF: My king! — What do you accuse me of unfaithfulness, when I followed your orders and led the two lazy rascals down to build the ramparts?

WITTIIG: Blast and blue fire! You carp head!

VANNIUS: House steward! — By my command, you say?

ROLF: Yes, indeed, King! Your servants Vangio and Sido called me to help them throw out the two rascals, because they did not want to go as they found the building of the rampart too hard work. They would not obey, so I drove them out of the gate with blows from my stick.

RUMOLD (*laughing*): House steward! This is a prank that would be funny if it weren't so terribly serious! Your own guard chases his prisoners out of the gate with beatings! — Do you expect us to believe such a fairy tale?

VANNIUS: Are you lying to my face?

ROLF: I am not lying, my king! Your cousins told me it was your will!

WITTIIG: Blast and blue fire, you —

VANNIUS: My cousins, you say?

KADOLD: Dragons and salamanders have deceived you, you fool!

ROLF: King! Your house steward is loyal to you, believe me! I obeyed your cousins because I could not foresee that they would lie to me!

VANNIUS: Keep your word!

ROLF: I will defend my honor, King! Dead or alive, I will bring your cousins here to the hall. They can tell you themselves who lied or who spoke the truth.
(*Exits quickly through the last side door on the right.*)

VANNIUS: By Mime's head! Who will solve this riddle for me!

WITTIG: By the evil Loki! — King! That is no longer a riddle. Vangio and Sido are plotting treason, they are plotting regicide and crown-theft, they have sent Petronius and his Marinius with a secret message to Tiberius. — Rolf is a stupid fool; he did not see through the cowardly ruse. That is all.

VANNIUS: I cannot believe that my own cousins would break the bonds of kinship!

NANA: What reasons could they have? Vangio is weak; so little of a man, perhaps he felt pity for Petronius?

VANNIUS: May be! — But how could he dare to do such a thing?

WITTIG: Pity? Queen, that is foreign to him! (*There is a commotion and a babble of voices behind the scene on the right. There is unrest in the hall; everyone curiously pushes*

backwards to the right.) Here comes Rolf. Soon you will know the truth, King!

ROLF (*from outside*): Come in, you liar-mouths! The King shall see who was unfaithful; you two or the steward.

VANGIO: Let go of me, you toad!

ROLF: You're the toad and the salamander, you traitor!

(Comes through with VANGIO and SIDO under Balgen, the last back door on the right and drags the resisters before the high seat.) There, say yourselves what I will not say, you scoundrels!

VANNIUS: Cousins! How did Petronius and Marinius escape? — Speak! I can read your guilt in your faces!

SIDO: King cousin, I know nothing!

VANGIO: I don't know what you want! — The toad is lying. Petronius may have bribed him he is shifting the blame onto me —

ROLF (*beside himself*): My king! For as long as Eburodun the old Spielberg stands, so long has such a brazen lie gone unheard! Did you not say, you insolent boy, "The King wills it," didn't you say, "The King sent the two Romans down as punishment for laziness to help drive the stakes into the ground!" Didn't you say that? — And didn't you go along with it (*tears the javelin from the wall and takes it in his hand, as VANGIO did*

before, and imitated his game with PETRONIUS) this spear yourself? Did you not cry out: "Will you go, Petronius?" And you deny this to my face, you scoundrel?

VANGIO: So you want to ruin me, you toad! You are the traitor! Petronius has bribed you!

SIDO: Yes, that must be so; I know nothing —

ROLF (*gasping with rage*): Gods in heaven above! You can testify to my innocence! King! — I can't speak anymore — the wall guard must know. You poisonous worm! I'll trample — crush — tear you apart with my teeth (*throws himself furiously at VANGIO*):

WITTIG: (*Pulling ROLF back.*) Blast and blue fire, house steward! The King sees who the traitor is — You will get justice! But you are not without guilt! How could you open the gate in the King's name when the King had not yet returned home?

ROLF (*dismayed*): Master! I thought the fellow had orders from Malfeld!

VANNIUS: My blacksmith! You are experienced and well-advised. Your accusation against my cousins weighs heavily. Confirm your words before I pass judgment.

WITTIG: By Urda's sacred monument! — King! Look at these wretched fellows, their guilt is written on

their faces like fiery runes of fate! Their guilty faces demand from you, my king, the noose! Let them hang, immediately!

SIDO (*sinking to his knees in lamentation*): Cousin King! Have mercy! Vangio let the Romans escape! I did not want to betray my brother — I am innocent!

VANGIO (furious with rage. You cowardly scoundrel! Did you not want to become king yourself? *(He is startled by his confession and wants to cover it up.)* That means — not here in Eburodunum, but —

KADOLD: Dragons and salamanders! Where did you want to become kings? Where?

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! King! To the gallows with these toads!

ROLF: Gods in heaven! Thank you!

ALL: King! To the gallows! To the gallows!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! King! Make it short! Raffo! Hango! Get ready! Bring the ropes! There's raven food to be had!

RAFFO: It shall be done! (*Exits with HANGO through the door to the right. Both return after a while and stand ready. RAFFO has thrown a red hooded cloak over himself, HANGO has a red cap on his head and a bundle of ropes in his hand.*)

VANGIO (*has collected himself*): What do you want, smith? We are —

WITTIG: — Treacherous clan-breakers who plot the murder of the King and the theft of the crown! No man will speak with you any longer!

ALL: To the gallows! To the gallows!

(*General excitement, tumult.*)

VANNIUS (*rising*): I command silence!

KADOLD: Silence in the King's chamber!

(*Silence falls, although the excitement grows.*)

VANNIUS: Vangio! Sido! You are guilty of treason and breaking the clan, and therefore I sentence you to —

NANA (*rushing in*): My Vannius, hold! Today, on this proud day of joy — no blood sentence!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire, Queen! — Forget that woman!

KADOLD: Dragons and salamanders! — King! Say it! Death to the clan-breakers!

ALL: Death! Death! To the gallows!

NANA: Vannius! They are your cousins! Your clan blood!

VANNIUS: They are as much related to me as I am to them, yet they have broken this clan bond!

NANA: Reconcile them with kindness, and you will win them as friends! They will thank you! Only today, no blood judgment — only today!

VANGIO (*kneeling beside the whimpering SIDO, with his hands raised in fearful supplication*): Cousin, forgive us! We meant no harm! Appearances are against us! Poor Petronius — he begged me so much that I helped him escape! Nothing more! — By our clan loyalty! You, Nana, implore our cousin! We will swear loyalty to you, we beg you —

NANA: Vannius!

VANGIO: Forgiveness!

SIDO: Dear cousin, forgive us —

WITTIG: By your sword, Queen! Be queen of the Queen!

NANA: My sword bearer! He who is strict with himself, who knows how hard it is to control oneself, is lenient towards others, especially when he sees their remorse! Vannius, let yourself be persuaded!

WITTIG: Queen! May you never regret these words! Your father was too lenient! Had he crushed Katuald, that worm, he would still be wearing his crown today! — King Vannius, crush this slimy worm while it still writhes and twists beneath your heel, or you will end

up like King Marbod! The scoundrel! To the gallows with —

VANGIO (*jumps up furiously, snatches the throwing spear from ROLF's hand and hurls it at WITTIG*): Die, you raging werewolf! — You gallows-friend! —

ALL (*in horror*): Murder! Murder!

(*WITTIG had anticipated the throw, ripped the bearskin from his shoulder, and caught the spear with it, which he contemptuously hurls away*)

VANNIUS: Vangio!

NANA: Cousin!

WITTIG (*rushes toward VANGIO and frees him from those attacking him*): Blast and blue fire! — Back! Do not dishonor yourselves with this scoundrel! (*To VANGIO, whom he forces back to his knees in front of the raised platform.*) You slimy toad! You know this old master-at-arms badly!

ALL: To the gallows with the murderer! Murderer!

VANNIUS: Vangio! For this new disgrace —

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! — King! This is not worth mentioning, this childish prank! You can let him have the rod for that.

KADOLD: Dragons and salamanders! King! Speak your sentence

ROLF: To the gallows!

ALL: Death!

NANA: Vannius! No blood sentence! Not today!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire, Queen! — Your sword bearer has warned you! Now he must no longer speak, otherwise one might think that this old master-at-arms is seeking revenge for that childish prank! *(Growls incomprehensible words into his beard)*

VANNIUS: Hear me well! Today, on the day of my triumph, I will show mercy — no blood shall be shed, no eye shall freeze in the throes of death! Vangio and Sido! You have forfeited your lives! Your guilt demands your death! But I do not wish to kill you. Let the gods rule, I place your lives and your deaths in their hands! Hear my sentence! I banish you and excommunicate you! All ties between you and all other men are severed, you are no longer men, you have neither name, rank, homeland nor possessions, you are now wild wolves and are banished as such! Be hunted like wild beasts of prey, whoever encounters you and spares your life commits murder, whoever kills you gains fame as if he had slain a ravenous beast! Fear, remorse, and despair, dread and terror shall accompany you until you find the dark paths to Hel and death comes to you approaches as your savior! With your heads shorn and naked, unfed and unwatered, you will be driven tomorrow before sunrise

with lashes from Eburodun's district! You are outlawed! Whoever encounters you, whenever and wherever it may be, may kill you, and whoever gives you hospitality or protection, shall pay with his right hand and his left foot! Go! Raffo and Hango, do as I commanded!

VANGIO (*desperate*): Cousin!

SIDO: Nana! I am innocent!

RAFFO (*in a red cloak, supported by HANGO, approaches the outlaws, from whom all shyly retreat them*): Come, you nameless ones, into misery — into the swamp and desert to wolves and bears, who will now be your companions. Come! (*He forces them to follow him and HANGO.*)

NANA (*sadly*): My Vannius! I thought your mercy would be different! — Will the heavens spare the condemned, will they not grow into your most bitter enemies? I would have wished for mercy and reconciliation so gladly!

VANNIUS: My dear Nana! I have not decided as king, but as judge! A judge must not seek revenge, nor show excessive mercy. They deserve death, and I have delivered them to it! — Now may fate take its course!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! King! You spoke a just judgment, but death would have been better, for it would have been more certain!

NANA: More certain, my sword bearer, would have been reconciliation; it transforms enemies into friends, just as one can tame even wild beasts with mercy.

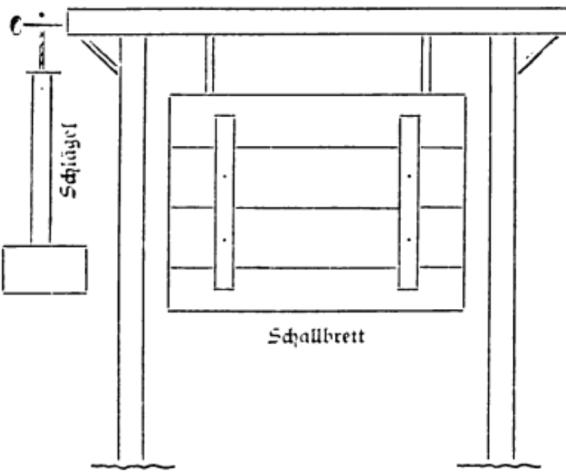
WITTIG: Blast and blue fire, Queen! Wild beasts, yes — but men? — Never!

(The curtain falls.)

End of the third act.

Fourth Act.

Set about fifteen years later. The royal court at Eburodunum. A spacious courtyard. In the middle stands an old, broad-leaved lime tree, in front of which is a high stone throne, with stone benches on both sides. Above the throne is a red canopy. To the right is the palace, to the left other buildings, between which is the large gate to the city. Everything is timberwork with a thatched roof (*like our farmhouses*), but richly decorated with carvings and partly painted in bright, vibrant colors. Above the courtyard gate rise three mighty envy poles, which at the top show skeletonized horse skulls with flowing manes. Two have white manes, but one has a black mane. Next to the entrance to the palace, on the right at the front, is a covered wooden bench with a folding table. Around the walls, as in today's farms, are distributed farm implements, horse harness, wood storage, barrels, tubs, etc. A four-wheeled cart with disc wheels is also visible. All the equipment, such as the cart, is made of solid wood with few iron components. Inside, next to the door, is a so-called "sound board." (*This is a large, table-shaped board that hangs like a swing on two ropes between wooden posts and, when struck with wooden mallets, emits a bell-like sound. These sound boards served as bells and other alarm devices in the past.*)



It is dawn, almost still night. The door is closed. The stage is empty. A rooster can be heard crowing

(ROLF, the house steward comes out of one of the side buildings on the left, sleepily; he stretches and yawns.)

ROLF: May Fraya's cats devour you, you troublemaker, with your accursed *cock-a-doodle-doo!* (*Imitates the crowing of a rooster.*) I was asleep and dreaming as sweetly as Rothbart in the Spielberg, and now I have to get up. (*Takes the mallet from the soundboard and hits it several times.*) — There, now I'm the rooster for you sleepyheads. What a pleasure! Well? Are you ready? (*Hits the soundboard again.*) — Ah! That feels good! That gets the blood flowing. If only it weren't such a dead sound board — I know a few people I'd like to give such blows to. (*Hits the board harder. From*

different sides come sleepy servants and maids. ROLF gives his orders, which are obeyed silently.)

SERVANTS and MAIDS: Good morning, house steward!

ROLF: Good morning, sleepyheads! You there! Unlock the door! (*A servant pushes back the heavy door bolts, lifts them out, places them next to the door and opens it rather noisily.*) “Let good things come in, blessings and happiness; keep evil from entering, my door!” — You, go to the stable, and you to the field! (*He goes back, servants and maids to different sides. It gets lighter.*)

(*NANA with MECHTHILDIS, comes out of the palace, folds the table board down and spreads a linen cloth over it.*)

MECHTHILDIS: Good Queen! Let me do that —

NANA: You know that serving the King is my right; he is my dear husband! Bring the cups, milk, butter, honey, and bread. The King will be here soon.

(*MECHTHILDIS exits into the palace.*)

Prince VANNIHOLD (*about fifteen years old, comes jumping out of the door of the palace and flies into his mother's arms*): Dear mother, greetings and sunshine in the morning!

(*The sun rises.*)

NANA (*embracing him tenderly*): My Vannihold, my sweet child!

VANNIHOLD: Mother! — Today I am riding with my father to Stilifrieda. Do you know, mother, that is not far from the Roman border; not far from Carnunt. Yes, mother, my father says he wants our Eburodun to be as beautiful as Carnunt.

NANA (*sighing*): Yes, your father, what wonderful and good things he wants, if only they could understand him, comprehend him! That often makes me so anxious — !

VANNIHOLD: That makes you anxious, mother? Look, your father thinks he knows his Quadi better; they are men of gold, they complain about everything, but they do what he wants. As long as they complain, everything is fine. You know, mother, I hate the complaining with all my heart. But father just laughs at it, and he must know better. If only I could get my sword ceremony over with and have a say in the matters, then these Quadi would rejoice! I'll tell them what I think!

VANNIUS (*who had stepped under the door of palace and heard the last words of young VANNIHOLD. He now steps laughing toward mother and son, calling out these friendly words to them.*) Do that when you are of age. But be sure that you then also have your own opinion!

Greetings to both of you with the lovely sun and a happy day!

(Embraces NANA.)

NANA: My Vannius!

VANNIHOLD (*embracing his father*): My dear, good father! I already know what my opinion is, and I will always defend it. Do want what is good and hate what is evil, and if people don't want to see the good, force them to do good, no matter what it takes!

VANNIUS: You will be king one day, my boy — stay true to this resolution, even when things get tough. (*Sighing.*) It's not always easy, because a crown is heavier to bear than all my Vannius guilders put together, and I have more of those than subjects!

(*MECHTHILDIS has brought breakfast. NANA sets the table. Two golden and one silver cup with milk, which is standing ready in a silver jug. Bread, honey, and butter on silver dishes. After everything is set, MECHTHILDIS leaves again. VANNIUS sits on the bench to the right of the folding table, while young VANNIHOLD stands in front of the table and eats his breakfast. During the meal, NANA serves father and son, preparing buttered bread with honey, pouring milk, etc.*)

NANA (*continuing to serve father and son with tender attention*): Are you riding to Stilifrieda today, Vannius?

VANNIUS (*affectionately*): Yes, my little Nana; right away. Kadold must already have the horses ready.

VANNIHOLD: I'm riding with you —

VANNIUS: I promised you that!

NANA: I don't like the idea of riding. What do you keep it so secret? You let your men ride alone, and now you yourself are riding so secretly after them. That seems like weakness to me!

VANNIUS (*laughing*): Cunning, my child, is not weakness, but wisdom!

NANA: Certainly, but it can be misinterpreted. And why the cunning? You are king — you are King Vannius! Why all this secrecy?

VANNIUS: Because I am forming an alliance for protection and defense with the Duke of the Jazyges!

NANA: It would be more fitting to conclude such an alliance in your palace at Eburodunum. — That is what I think, my Vannius.

VANNIUS: If it did not have to be kept secret, little one — most certainly.

NANA: Do I hear you rightly? Why is that?

VANNIUS: Now you shall learn of it. My dear cousins, Vangio and Sido, who —

NANA (*terrified*): Vangio and Sido!? — Are the dead rising from their graves? Sixteen years ago, you banished them to the wolves in misery!

VANNIUS: Unfortunately not to the dead in the realm of Hel!

NANA (*horrified*): Vannius!? (*With a slight reproach:*) My Vannius! Was it not my advice, my urgent request, through paternal kindness to reconcile your cousins, to raise them as your grateful friends?

VANNIUS: Dear little Nana! I tried that too, before you became my queen, but unfortunately my efforts were in vain! The evil spirit of greed had entered them, and it was indelibly engraved in their hearts. They were lost to it, body and soul, with head and heart! I should have let them hang instead of challenging fate! That was my fault, and now I must face the consequences.

NANA: My Vannius! How magnanimous of you to take my guilt upon yourself! You have sacrificed your better judgment to my pleas!

VANNIUS: My dear little Nana, don't torment yourself! You meant so well! — Fear not! King Vannius has already defeated other dangers than this! And my forest bride, my proud eagle, must surely know that the wolf is no longer dangerous to those who see him first!

NANA: But I fear that you saw the wolf too late, and not as the first!

VANNIUS (*casually*): Early enough to render him harmless!

NANA: But I still do not understand the connection. Explain to me —

VANNIUS: How the two scoundrels were saved? I do not know. They must have found friends who helped them flee across the Danube to the Romans. I cannot think of any other explanation, for many years have passed, and I long ago considered them dead and lost. — For some time now, I have felt the people becoming more hostile towards me, and I learned from my confidants that agitators were secretly roaming the country, trying to stir up the easily deceived masses. The promises they make to the people are excessive, and I often laughed at how clumsy and stupid, how unfulfillable, these promises were. But I have come to realize more and more clearly that their evil seeds are sprouting, which I could hardly believe. So I had the agitators searched for and promised high rewards for their heads, but to no avail. I have only heard, and this is completely confirmed, that they are two men believed to be dead. They are the most favored messengers of Emperor Caligula, for Rome is already lurking below, waiting to take revenge on me and weaken the threat of a powerful Quadi empire. So we

must be careful and make sure that no one suspects that I know about these intrigues.

NANA (*dismayed*): Is your situation so dire already?!

VANNIUS (*laughing*): Dire?! No, my little Nana, it is not dire at all! It is difficult, my proud eagle, to win a crown — but much, much more difficult to keep it. That requires more than manly courage; above all, it requires royal cunning. — (*Pointedly*.) And both are in the Quadi king Vannius' undisputed possession! Thanks be to the victorious father Wuotan!

NANA: Yes, I know you, and I know you strong enough, my Vannius, to remain steadfast in the face of such turmoil. But —

VANNIUS: But — ?

NANA: The means! You are still the proud Quadi king, aren't you? The people owe you gratitude for regaining and preserving their freedom, the very freedom that you now want to undermine through the Jazyges alliance? If you are still king and want to remain so, renounce foreign help, seek this help from the Quadi, and if they refuse you, then force them to do so! — My king! In your people you must find your strongest support, for a king who needs foreign help is no king anymore!

VANNIUS: At first glance, my dear little Nana, you may well be right, but your judgment does not apply in this

case. What I have created for the Quadi is to them so unexpectedly new and strange, so abundant and rich, that they are confused and need guidance through force more than ever. My people feel the blessings of peace, the benefits of wealth, the great happiness of security, but they believe that these blessings must now continue to grow in equal measure — this benefit, this happiness, must continue to grow without them having to defend it any further. My Quadi have become insatiable and spoiled. They now listen to the excessive promises of my envious enemies and believe that I have become stingy because I cannot grant them such things. They would leave me to follow those deceivers, and that is why I need foreign help to force my people to their own salvation, as well as to defend them against Rome, which lurks on the Danube with a lust for plunder.

NANA: Then seek this help from kindred peoples who speak our language and honor our gods!

VANNIUS: How gladly! — If only they were not jealous of my wealth and power! They would be the first to help overthrow me, to join my enemies, regardless of whether they come from the Tiber or whether they are outlawed clan-breakers.

NANA (*shaken*): So you stand alone, because you wanted what was good, what was best!? (*Rising with proud dignity.*) Then stand alone, and grow to tower above

this small world, so that you can make it tremble in its foundations. Rule with fear and terror instead of mildness, be a king of iron, a tyrant! Force the ungrateful people with the sharpest scourge for his blessing, with bloody executioner's axes for unrecognized good deeds, with the gallows rope for their own happiness, but proudly renounce foreign help!

VANNIUS: Is that what you say, Nana?

NANA: Yes, I am your eagle! Only now do I recognize your people!

VANNIUS: My eagle! — Your advice is good, but to follow it, I need the Jazyges horsemen!

NANA: Then ride to Stilfrieda, conclude the treaty, but with this man at your side, become steel, iron, stone — hard and cold as frozen ice, relentless as fate itself!

VANNIUS (*stands up*): So I will do, my proud eagle bride! It has become clear to me as well that I have led my people too mildly. (*To Vannihold.*) Call the Marshal, Vannihold.

VANNIHOLD (*quickly puts aside the cup from which he was about to drink*): Yes, father. (*Starts to leave.*)

NANA (*hands him the cup*): Drink up, my Vanni!

VANNIHOLD (*drinks quickly; while drinking:*) Let me saddle the horses, father! May I?

NANA (*quickly pushes a honey sandwich toward Vannihold*):

Hurry! Then go to the stable. (*To VANNIUS.*) My Vannius! Take good care of our dear Vannihold!

VANNIUS (*caressing NANA*): Little Nana! How can you worry like that? Isn't he the most precious gift you ever gave me?

VANNIHOLD: Dear little mother! That should have been your name! I will protect father! (*Brandishes a short sword.*) If that's not a sword yet, it's strong enough to defend my father's life.

NANA (*caressing him*): My sun-son!

VANNIUS: Now go on, boy, and saddle the horse. You know —

VANNIHOLD (*leaving*): I know, I know, the stallion "Will" for you, and the gelding "Wish" for me. (*Runs quickly to the back.*)

NANA: Then it is to be kept secret that you are going on a long ride?

VANNIUS: So it shall be, little Nana. — It will appear to be a hunting trip, short in duration.

NANA: But, my dearest, what if you are needed here?

VANNIUS: Nana! You would ask that? You who have so often represented me better than I could represent

myself? Do not worry, nothing will happen in Eburodun that you cannot handle.

KADOLD (*coming from behind*): My king, “Will” and “Wish” are saddled and bridled.

VANNIUS: Then we will ride!

NANA: Ride with good luck, my Vannius!

VANNIHOLD (*running up*): Father, we are ready!

NANA: Wait! (*Hurries into the palace, and comes out immediately with two quivers and two gourd bottles.*) Here, for the hunt, if you should linger longer than you wish!

VANNIUS (*saying a tender farewell, putting on his quiver and gourd bottle*): How good you are! — Farewell!

VANNIHOLD (*dressing himself just as quickly*): Thank you, mother! (*Secretly to NANA.*) Did you pack me a lot of honey?

NANA (*likewise, caressing him*): Also cake and pastries! Farewell, my darling, and come back safe! (*Kisses her son.*)

VANNIHOLD: Dear mother, farewell! — Now, away!

VANNIUS (*embracing NANA once more*): Farewell, dear little Nana! (*Exits with the Marshal and his son through the door on the left.*)

NANA (*accompanying him to the door and waving goodbye*):

Farewell, until we meet again! (*Returns and sits down at the table, lost in thought.*)

MECHTHILDIS (*enters and clears the table*): My queen!

— What joy! How proud the young lord sits on his horse! One can see the future king growing up in him.

ROLF (*enters from behind*): Good morning, Queen. I have just seen the King with the young lord. As handsome as young Balder!

NANA: Good morning, house steward! Yes, young Vannihold looks as if he were a king on horseback!

MECHTHILDIS: Why, my queen, does the King not grant our dear young gentleman a long sword? Our Vanni could wield it like an older man!

ROLF: Yes, he could —

NANA (*flattered*): You good people, of course he could, but he is not yet ready for the sword test!

MECHTHILDIS: But Queen! Is he not a king's son?

NANA: Of course he is, but the King says that even for someone like him, the time-honored custom and inherited tradition must be upheld.

(*Hammering can be heard coming from the invisible smithy behind them.*)

Our Vanni must become skilled in everything and learn everything, especially to steel his will through obedience, so that he may pass the sword test and become a true, complete man.

ROLF: My queen! — That is wise and good, as is everything the King does. But a long riding sword would adorn our young lord so proudly!

(*KADOLD and RANDMAR come from behind, engaged in eager conversation.*)

MECHTHILDIS: Yes, yes, dear Queen — the King could surely grant that to our young lord.

NANA: Leave it be, my friends. Our Vanni can wait. He might arouse envy among the other boys; it is good as it stands. A sword should not be a toy.

(*MECHTHILDIS clears the table and folds it up.*)

KADOLD: My queen, greetings on this morning.

RANDMAR: Hail, my queen!

NANA: Heartfelt greetings to you both! What good news do you bring?

KADOLD: My queen! The King will not be away too long, will he?

NANA: I am expecting the King today, but he may not come home until tomorrow. Why?

KADOLD: I don't know why, Queen, but in the city, things are not as they should be. That is why I sent Sintold out on reconnaissance to gather information.

RANDMAR: Queen, it is as the Marshal says. I advise you to go to the palace —

ALL: (*worried, talking in confusion*): Yes, yes, go to the palace. It is better that way. Until the King returns home. You should not expose yourself to any danger, Queen!

NANA (*alone has retained her composure; in a proud, upright posture*): You think that I, the Queen of the Quadi — I, King Vannius' noble wife — I, child of Marbot, King of the Marcomanni — I, would be capable of hiding myself like a coward? What danger is approaching? Marshal, speak!

KADOLD: Dear Queen! Believe me, nothing is approaching that you need to fear, because then — Roman murder and arson! — Then we would have enough swords to protect you; but it would be unwise, Queen, if you remained here before the King returned. Go to palace, Queen, and if you notice anything unusual here, do not let yourself be seen.

NANA (*regal*): Your advice may be right, you noble and loyal men. Unimportant matters can wait until the King returns, but remember well that I will appear here, even without the King, if I deem it necessary, for

mark this well, you dear and loyal men! — I am the queen!

(She walks proudly and resolutely with MECHTHILDIS back into the palace. The men who remain behind bow silently and remain standing for a while after the Queen's departure, silent and motionless.)

KADOLD: Queen Nana. you would be worthy of wearing a sword! Roman murder and arson — yes!

RANDMAR: She is as determined as the King himself!

ROLF: And yet so kind and good —

SINTOLD *(coming through the gate):* Marshal! Marshal! — Close the gate, and sound the horns, light the Kraiân fires!

KADOLD: Roman murder and arson! — What else could there be!? Open up! What is going on?

SINTOLD: The townspeople are coming and they do not look like people who want to beg!

KADOLD: Is that so?! Roman murder and arson! Let them come! They will learn to beg —

(A babble of voices can be heard approaching the chorus. KADOLD, RANDMAR, SINTOLD, and ROLF stand expectantly in front of palace on the right. The hammering from the smithy continues. With shouting and tumult, a crowd of townspeople pushes through the gate into the

courtyard and takes up positions on the left. RUMOLD, the town elder, is gradually pushed to the foreground and finally stands facing the four royal men. There is great unrest, people swaying excitedly back and forth, loud incomprehensible shouting. The forging remains clearly audible throughout the scene.)

KADOLD (*imperiously*): Silence, you people in the royal court! I command silence! (*The shouting continues.*) Silence, or I will have the King's guard drive you from the court! What do you want? Let one speak — there stands old Rumold — let him speak!

Several VOICES from the crowd: Let Rumold speak!

Other VOICES: Where is the King?

(*Renewed unrest, excited gesticulation.*)

KADOLD: Roman murder and arson! — I command you to be quiet, I am the King's marshal!

Several VOICES: Where is the King?

KADOLD: The King has ridden across the country. Let one man speak, and the others keep their peace, or you will all be punished by the King! Once more and for the last time, speak you for all!

(*Tumult.*)

RUMOLD: Keep quiet, men of Eburodun. Quiet!

(*Tumult.*)

Several VOICES: The King! the King!

(*KADOLD whispers a few words in SINTOLD's ear, whereupon the latter goes into the palace.*)

RUMOLD: Let me speak for you —

Several VOICES: No, it's too serious! The King! — King Vannius!

(*SINTOLD brings a long pole and a broad red slouch hat, on which a golden three-pronged crown is placed and decorated with a large eagle feather. KADOLD plants the pole in front of the lime tree and places the hat on top of it. The people retreat to the left, toward the gate and become calmer. To the right, in front of palace, stand the King's men, to the left, toward the gate, the town councilors.*)

KADOLD (*steps in front of the pole so that the hat covers him, bares his head, and speaks*): I command silence and the King's peace! In the name of the King! Under the King's hat, I command peace! Whoever disregards my royal command will pay with a Vannius guilder, or be flogged at the pillory!

(*The last murmurs die down, and calm returns.*)

In the name of the King, standing under the King's hat, I demand that you, RUMOLD, speak. What is the desire of those from Eburodun? Speak!

RUMOLD (*stepping forward, to KADOLD*): Hear me, Marshal, in the King's stead! We, from Eburodun, are

angry with the King because he oppresses us harshly. We cannot give him enough gold and pay our taxes on top of that. Now he wants to build roads, then new ramparts, and even towers made of stone, like castles of the giants themselves! That is too much for us, we will not pay any more, it is enough!

VOICES from the people: That's right! (*Murmurs.*)

RUMOLD (*signals back, the murmuring murmurs die down*): Yes, that's right, Marshal in the King's place. The King fills his treasury with his Danubian guilders, as we fill our grain pits with grain. We think he has enough gold.

VOICES from the people: More than enough! Too much! (*Murmurs.*)

KADOLD (*who is struggling to keep calm*): Are you finished at last, Rumold? Not yet? Then you may continue later. Hear me in the King's place, you ungrateful people! What do you think the King is collecting his treasures for? He can't eat the gold, nor can he drink it.

A VOICE from the crowd: He has enough people to help him use the gold!

Another VOICE: Useless scoundrels!

SINTOLD: By Helas' dog! Are we scoundrels? What you enjoy today, we helped the King to create!

ROLF: Drive them out!

VOICES from the crowd: Try it!

KADOLD: Peace in the King's name!

RUMOLD: I beg you, be patient. (*The tumult subsides again.*) Let the Marshal speak, people!

KADOLD: This you know. The King gave peace to the Quadiland. The Romans are afraid to attack it because it has become strong and rich. To whom do you owe that? To the King and his works! You live quietly behind your walls, safe and secure; you reap what you sow and store up your supplies, without the enemies burning your huts, devastating your fields, driving away your herds, murdering your children, making your women slaves and chasing you away or killing you! You owe this to the King! — And even more! You have learned to make good use of the Vannius guilders; the Romans buy your surplus grain, linen, skins; even iron and livestock, such as horses, with them. In return, you buy wine from the Romans, sweet fruits and many other things that were completely unattainable for you until now. Is that nothing? Who helped you achieve this, if not the King's tireless rule? The roads make it easier for you to get from place to place and also hasten the movement of the army. This has made you rich, and the taxes you have to pay in ten years are not even a tenth of what a week of war would cost. Is that

nothing? You ungrateful people! And the taxes that the King collects are the reserves for future wars, so that the country and you will not be hit too hard. Is that nothing?!

RUMOLD: Marshal in the King's stead! What you say is true, but it is also true that the King is not lenient and he is no spendthrift!

VOICES from the crowd (*less noisy*): No, he is not!

KADOLD: Is that so? Did he not, out of his royal prerogative, build new towns, endow them with estates, provide them with livestock and equipment, and then give many acres of land to them, and then settle second-born and subsequent children on them as townspeople? Did the King not do that? And whose second-born children were those whom he raised from servitude to lordship? Were they not your children? You ungrateful people — your children that he made rich from his own wealth? And does the King not continue to build new walled cities, which he populates in the same way, and pay for all this from his own treasury? Speak! Can you deny this, you ungrateful people!

Some VOICES from the crowd: Yes, that happened, that is the truth.

Other VOICES: That is all true, but —

KADOLD: But? Roman murder and arson! What do you mean, “but”?

A VOICE from the crowd: The King's own cousins testify against him!

KADOLD: The King's cousins? Dragons and salamanders! Since before living memory, these cowardly clan-breakers have been outlawed and banished, dishonored and nameless! Anyone who even speaks to them loses their right hand and left foot! How can such wretches testify against a king? — Testify against King Vannius!

A VOICE from the crowd: They have returned and told us how the King oppresses us, and so we wanted to —

SINTOLD: Be silent, you poisonous worm, or —

ROLF: Kill him, the seducer of the people!

The KING'S MEN: Kill him!

Some VOICES from the crowd: Yes, kill him!

Other VOICES: He speaks as our friend! (*Tumult.*)

RUMOLD: Men of Eburodun! Listen! (*The noise subsides*): What the Marshal has spoken in the King's stead is true! (*new tumult*) Listen, you men! — Yes! I will believe that the King is gathering his treasures to help us if crop failure or war should bring us harm. But Marshal, tell us in the King's stead what this

means, that we were assured was true on faith and honor — the King, we were told, wanted to gather his gold only to go to Rome and live there as a great lord.

KADOLD: Those scoundrels, who plan regicide and crown theft, who have been outlawed, who narrowly escaped the gallows — those scoundrels dare to seduce you, and you are foolish enough to believe these lies?

A VOICE from the crowd: The King's cousins spoke as friends of the people; they enlightened us. They have suffered grave injustice!

Other VOICES: That's right!

KADOLD: Silence!

(*Tumult.*)

The KING'S MEN: Beat them to death like rabid dogs!

RUMOLD: Eburoduners! — Quadi! (*He is shouted down, and prevented from speaking.*)

A VOICE from the crowd: Death to the King!

Another VOICE: Death to the King!

(*From behind come WITTIG, RAFFO, and HANGO, running with red-hot iron poles. The greater part of the Eburoduner, including RUMOLD, go to the right toward the KING'S MEN and take up position with them against the REBELS. Everyone draws their weapons and*

(the two groups stand facing each other, ready for battle; the KING'S MEN are the greater number.)

The KING'S MEN: Here, King Vannius!

The REBELS: Here, the kings Vangio and Sido!

WITTIG (*intervening with his companions, waving the red-hot iron rods*): Blast and blue fire! Kadold, you bastard! No more words — just blows! (*Storms into the mob, which flees but blows! howling from the gate.*)

KADOLD: Roman murder and arson!

All KING'S MEN: Hail King Vannius!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! Shut your mouths, you howlers! Action, not howling, is the order of the day! You Marshal, pursue those men! Do you hear? Go and take them prisoner! Capture them, all of you! Immediately! They must pay for this, here under the King's hat — with their heads!

KADOLD: I wanted to avoid this.

RUMOLD: The blacksmith is right! Capture all those who remain behind. Yes, Marshal — do it! We will help you!

KADOLD: Roman murder and arson! Follow me!

ALL: Hail to the King!

(All rush out of the gate, only WITTIG, RAFFO, and HANGO remain behind. They stand, coincidentally, like guards in front of the pole with the King's hat. WITTIG in front of it, RAFFO and HANGO on either side.)

WITTIG *(gives his pole to RAFFO)*: Get out of the way! Hazel sticks and birch rods would have done just as well! By Donar's wrath! Toads and frogs, those —

RAFFO: Master! The Marshal should have talked less and hit harder!

HANGO: Now heads must roll because of their "Death to the King!" He could have prevented that.

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire, you carp heads! It had to come out, and those who said it must pay with their heads as penance to the King! Don't you know that? If the word had not been spoken, it would have continued to fester in the minds of the people like a creeping fire in the forest, which now here, now there would have whipped up the flames the treetops until the whole forest was reduced to smoke and ashes. It had to come to this in order to extinguish the threatening fire. Away with the poles.

(RAFFO and HANGO go back with the poles. NANA appears standing upright in the doorway of palace.)

WITTIG *(seeing her)*: Queen! Hail to all the Aesir in the morning!

NANA: Thank you and greetings to you, my faithful sword bearer! (*walks majestically to the center of the stage.*) Like fiery Erich you came storming here with your blacksmith apprentices and chased away the mutineers. — That's how I imagined my sword bearer! Thank you, my smith!

WITTIG: Queen! No thanks necessary! It's not worth mentioning! My bellows would have chased away those frogs; I am ashamed of myself for heating the iron bars!

NANA: Despite their “Death to the King!?”

WITTIG (*contemptuously*): Just a spark! A little Quadi blood, a little bloodletting, and the flame is extinguished!

NANA: It's enough to drive one mad with rage! The King! — Why? For what reason? What guilt is the King being blamed for? “Death to the King”!?

WITTIG: Did Balder fare any better? And he was the best, the wisest of all the Aesir! Is King Vannius more than a man?

NANA: But against the King? For what crime? He created the people's happiness and wealth!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire, queen! That is what they blame him for! The people are not accustomed to such

prosperity, they revel in abundance and wealth, and that makes them arrogant!

NANA: And that is his fault!?

WITTIG: By Mimes' head, Queen! Yes, that is the King's fault — yes, that is the greatest fault a man can ever bring upon himself, for he is great, and greatness is not tolerated by petty rats. Therefore: "Death to the King!" Envy and resentment will bring about his downfall — he will fall, King Vannius, but fall as a hero! Beyond measure will be the death sacrifice, which shall burn up to heaven from its greatness!

NANA (*frozen with terror*): Sword bearer!

WITTIG: Queen of queens! I implore you, be strong, be queen of the Queen! Forget that woman, show no mercy to those rats! Sow their heads with dry eyes in the sand. That will be good seed for future times!

NANA (*stares at WITTIG in horror. After a pause, as if awakening from a heavy dream*): Sword bearer, I thank you! You have lifted the veil from my eyes with magical power. Yes, the future is clear to me. I look into the distance, and the beginning of the end is revealed to me! (*Reflecting.*) Sword-bearer, what did you just say? Yes, yes, that's it: "The little rat spirits are too powerful for King Vannius' spirit, and therefore he must fall as a hero — but as immeasurable as his greatness, so too shall be the great sacrifice that will

rise in flames follow him!" (*In heroic enthusiasm, proudly erect and with his oath hand raised toward the hat pole:*) Vannius! Your Nana swears this sacrifice to you!

WITTIG (*kneeling with raised hands and bowed head before NANA*): Sitting on the sun chair, Herian hears your oath. (*He rises.*)

(*A distant babble of voices can be heard, coming closer and closer.*)

WITTIG: Strong mistress! They are coming!

NANA: I am ready to meet my fate.

(*KADOLD, RUMOLD, RANDMAR, SINTOLD, ROLF, and the Kings' men and city guards bring the prisoners, five¹⁾ in number, bound, with cries and noise, into the gate and lead them before the guard post, where they are forced to kneel. NANA and WITTIG stand at the front right in front of the palace entrance. Noisy commotion.*)

KADOLD (*as they enter*): Dragons and salamanders! Come in, you toads! Come in! None of you "Death-to-the-King" croakers will get out! Remember that! Roman murder and arson! (*Only now does the Queen become aware of them.*) Hail to you, Queen!

¹⁾ Depending on the available cast, there may be more or fewer prisoners. The more, the more effective.

ALL: Hail, Queen!

The PRISONERS. Mercy! Have pity! Plead with the King for us! Mercy, Queen! Mercy!

KADOLD: Dragons and salamanders! Silence! I will lock you in the deepest hole of the yard, where you can whistle with the rats until the King returns home!

The PRISONERS: Mercy, Queen!

NANA (*stepping forward*): Mercy, for you? No, justice! (*Walks proudly to the armchair under the lime tree and takes her place.*) Marshal, report!

KADOLD: Queen! — I am only allowed to report to the King when he is seated on the royal throne —

NANA: Is that so, Marshal? Good! (*She rises, walks proudly toward the guard post, takes down the hat and puts it on herself, then lifts the pole from the ground and walks with it, as if it were a staff, back to the King's throne, on which she sits down. Amazement and murmurs of applause.*)

NANA: In order to maintain and nurture a true and genuine kingship, twelve lay judges are needed, a Thing official and a Sacrifice official. You Raffo, fetch sword and cloak, that is your right as sacrificer of Froh. (*RAFFO exits.*) The Thing official will be you, Rolf. Wittig, Randmar, Sintold, Nosker, Wolfgang, and Berengar, you are the King's aldermen! Rumold

and five city elders, you form the people's aldermen.
Rolf, my Thing official, consecrate the Thing!

(The aforementioned King's aldermen take their places on the right on the stone seats, the people's aldermen on the left. ROLF gives orders, goes into the palace and brings MECHTHILDIS and GERBERGA out, the former carrying a spindle and standing to the right behind NANA, while GERBERGA with a ball of red silk thread goes with ROLF around the Thing, ROLF sticks lances into the ground at four corners, to which he attaches the silk threads so that the court, jurors, officials and defendants stand enclosed within the silk threads [as in a barrier]. RAFFO in a red cloak, with the mighty sword of justice slung over his shoulder, comes from behind and stands to the right of the King's throne. The place of the court official ROLF is to the left of the King's throne, unless he is otherwise occupied. GERBERGA stands with the ball of silk thread to the left behind the King's throne.)

ROLF *(while enclosing the gathering with the red silk thread)*: Be consecrated and prepared as a right and true royal gathering; be unforgettable like a Halgadom, be unforgettable like Forsatti himself, the supreme judge over gods and men, over the dead and the living. *(When he is finished, he steps forward the Queen.)* My queen! The royal Thing is complete; it has been consecrated and prepared justly. *(He stands to the left of the King's chair, opposite RAFFO.)*

NANA: The royal Thing has now been consecrated and prepared according to custom and law, and now I call in the name of Forsatti, son of Balder, the dead and the living to court!

ROLF: The dead and the living to court! First! — The dead and the living to court! Second! — The dead and the living to court! Third! —

KADOLD: I have a complaint to make!

ROLF: Marshal, step forward and complain!

KADOLD (*steps before the Queen; ROLF encloses him in the red thread.*) My queen! Hail to you! To your royal throne — to you, most gracious one, as the visible representative of the invisible but omnipresent judge of gods and men, of the wise son of Balder, Forsatti, I accuse these ignoble ones — today, here in the royal court — of shouting “Death to the King!” and “Hail the kings Vangio and Sido!” — and with weapons in their hands, of breaking the King's peace. I demand a fair judgment to atone for this crime!

NANA: Is what you say and accuse proven, Marshal?

KADOLD: It is proven.

NANA: Who speaks against them?

ALL: It is proven! No one raises an objection!

NANA: You who accuse them, speak! Has the Marshal reported truthfully?

The PRISONERS. It is true! — Mercy!

NANA: You aldermen, deliver the verdict! Those who kneel before you in chains have been convicted and have confessed here in the King's court to having shouted "Death to the King!" and "Hail the kings Vangio and Sido!" — and, with weapons in their hands, to having broken the King's peace. How shall they atone?

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! These fellows are now a head too tall! Cut them down by that much, and lay their heads at your feet.

RUMOLD: Their heads should be cut off at the neck.

RANDMAR: Death by the sword!

All the ALDERMEN. Death by the sword!

NANA (*rising, leaning on her staff as if on a lance*): Hear and be silent! I pronounce in the King's stead — as the visible representative of the invisible Balder's son Forsatti, the judge of gods and men — the verdict. Hear and be silent! You wicked men who cried "Death to the King!" — Your lives are forfeited, you will pay for your guilt with your heads! Here before the King's throne, your heads will be cut off with the sword and placed on the pillories as a warning to others; your

decapitated bodies will be thrown by the serfs into every courtyard to remain there unburied until the King's return! The judgment has been pronounced — Thing official, lead the condemned before the King's throne. Victims, stand ready. (*She sits down, visibly exhausted but strong-willed.*)

KADOLD: Queen! You forgot the property of the condemned, the farms — they now belong to the King!

The PRISONERS. Mercy! Have pity! Our children, Queen!

NANA: Marshal! Nothing has been forgotten; the verdict has been pronounced! Hear and be silent! It is the duty of the judge to speak justly, and it is the noble right of the King to show mercy! The property of the accused shall remain undiminished for their wives and children! I command this in the King's stead!

The TOWNSPEOPLE: Hail to the Queen!

The KING'S MEN: Our share! Queen, our share!

NANA: It will be given to you from the king's treasury.

KADOLD and the KING'S MEN: Hail to the Queen!

NANA: Official! The condemned!

ROLF (*to them*): Up! Stop your wailing! Before the King's throne!

The PRISONERS. Mercy! Have pity, Queen!

NANA: Justice and mercy have been granted to you as I must, and as I may. Hear and be silent!

(The condemned stand before the Queen, RAFFO with cloak and sword on the right, ROLF on the left of NANA.)

NANA (*rising with solemn dignity, leaning on the staff as if on a lance. Anxious silence, solemn calm*): The sentence has been pronounced, and I hereby condemn you evildoers to outlawry and exile, and —

The PRISONERS. Mercy! — Have mercy! Queen, have mercy!

NANA (*continuing unperturbed*): — by breaking the judgment staff over you (*breaks the staff in two over her knee and throws the pieces at the feet of the condemned*) I commit you to the justice of him who judges men and gods with his infallible judgment. (*NANA sits down on the throne.*) Sacrifice official, do your duty!

(ROLF leads the first man to the center of the stage, makes him kneel down, while RAFFO steps behind him and raises his sword to deliver the death blow.)

(The curtain falls quickly.)

End of the fourth act.

Fifth Act.

Set one year later. In front of the castle within the walls of Stilfrieda. On the right is the wooden castle, built log-cabin-style of mighty, cross-layered tree trunks; unequal height, with a heavy board roof weighted down by stones. A crude wooden gate leads into the interior of the castle under a porch resting on wooden pillars. Under this porch are wooden benches on both sides. The irregularly spaced windows, which can be closed with beams, are of different sizes. On the left is a heavy gate building, tower-like in shape and made of tree trunks, with a flat terrace-like roof roof surrounded by a parapet. Behind is the red-burnt earthen wall with a parapet of wicker facing outwards. The wall and the tower terrace can be climbed. Skeletonized horse skulls grin down from the gables of the castle, as well as above the castle gate. On the gate tower, as above the castle gate of Eburodun, are three envy poles with waving horse manes. All around the walls are weapons for ranged combat, such as javelins, pitch garlands, stones, slings, etc. Since Stilfrieda lies on a hill with no rear terrain, the background is empty air, with nothing in view. The tower gate and castle gate are locked. It is night, the full moon is in the sky and floods the scene with its pale light. In the middle of the stage, about two wings deep, is a campfire, whose reddish glow illuminates everything around it and creates strange lighting effects in the moonlight. In front of the castle gate stand and sit WITTIG, KADOLD, ROLF,

RUMOLD, and several of the King's soldiers, fully armed with shields and helmets. WITTIG's shield shows a black hammer and tongs crossed on a yellow background. On the tower terrace, RANDMAR stands guard with armed men, as does SINTOLD on the ramparts, also surrounded by armed Quadi. In the open space, armed Quadi stand and lie in various groups, some sleeping, some playing dice, etc. Around the fire are RAFFO and HANGO with some Quadi.

ROLF (*laughing*): By all the helpers in need! Now, good Rumold, this is a good day's work with your sword, instead of your Vannius guilders!

KADOLD (*laughing at RUMOLD, who is sitting gloomily huddled on the bench with his head buried in his hands, and gives him a friendly slap on the shoulder*): Why are you so miserable, Eburoduner? The whistling of blades, the clash of spears and the roar of shields don't seem to be your favorite music, eh?

RAFFO (*calling from the fire*): His Vannius guilders sing him more beautiful tunes. Ever since he buried —

RUMOLD (*looking up angrily and glancing nervously around*): You fool! I — buried?

KADOLD (*laughing*): Rumold, Rumold! Yes, that's just like him! — Dragons and salamanders! What a splendid fellow he was before you shaped the Vannius

guilders, Wittig! I could almost be angry with you for it! It always seems to me as if every piece of gold were possessed by one of those evil spirits whose king is the spirit of greed himself! Anyone who once holds such a golden coin tightly in his fist is already in the grip of the spirit of greed himself, who holds him tighter and tighter the more such gold coins flow into his hand!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! Is it my fault if stupidity turns good fortune into misery?

RUMOLD (*laughing forcedly*): As if you would have thrown them away, Marshal!

HANGO (*as before to RAFFO*): Leave our good Rumold alone! He has become lazy, that's all! Behind the walls of Eburodun he has forgotten how to be constantly ready for battle, and that is why he no longer enjoys a campaign.

ROLF (*laughing*): Is that it, my Rumold? Yes, at home, where others work for you and you can lean back on your bearskin — yes, that's certainly much nicer!

RAFFO (*from the fire*): You could have let others go to war for you, dear Rumold. (*Everyone laughs.*) That would have been even nicer!

HANGO: Then you could let your Vannius guilders sing you to sleep. That's probably what you long for, eh?

RUMOLD: Mock me now! That's still to come if developments continue like this. We city dwellers have our ramparts to defend — we should be exempt from military service!

WITTIG: By Donar's wrath!

RUMOLD: So be it, and so it shall be! The city dweller stays at home and has only his ramparts to defend, while auxiliary troops fight the battles. There are enough of them. Or does the King not have any auxiliary troops now? What would the Jazyges be then?

WITTIG: By the flaming sword of Erich! Are you still a Quadi, Rumold? Is that how a Quadi repays our king for his great deeds to gain our freedom!? Before, the Quadi were like the wolves of the rage-father, but now they are beginning to turn into Siebias' flock of sheep! Pitiful Vannius!

KADOLD: Roman murder and arson! That is what I say too. The crowding together in the city walls, the Vannius guilders, and the opulence brought about by wealth according to the Roman model, that is what enervates the people and makes them lazy and weak.

RUMOLD: Marshal! I — and also many others — had to leave my court and my estate, and I don't know if, or when, or how I will find my property again. I'd

rather pay the Roman taxes and remain in peace than because of some King's arrogance —

WITTIG (*turns away contemptuously*): Toads' croaking!

KADOLD: Rumold, my little foot-burgrave! Beware of Raffo! He has a red cloak and such a large penknife that he could shave off your beard more thoroughly than you would like!

(*Laughter.*)

RUMOLD (*wraps himself deeper in his bearskin and lies down on the ground as if he wants to sleep*): Just watch out for a sore throat yourself! — A sore throat! It won't always stay this way; other times will come.

(*Dawn breaks.*)

RANDMAR (*calling down from the tower to SINTOLD on the rampart*): Hoiho, Sintold! Do you see anything?

(*Everyone looks expectantly toward the tower.*)

SINTOLD (*peering out*): Nothing special, tower guard! Only some townspeople lying around moaning because the ground seems harder than their beds at home.

(*Laughter and exclamations.*)

RANDMAR: Look out, wall guard — look out! Down tuhere under the bushes, something is glimmering like iron!

SINTOLD: Moonlight in the willows; it's nothing

WITTIG: What is it, door guard? — It seems to me the Roman is barking in the bush!

RANDMAR: My ears tell me nothing, but my eyes do.
But in the deceptive light of the moon — ?

SINTOLD: Yes, there's movement in the bush, like when the stag wants to break out of the woods in the morning.

KADOLD: Will they storm again, after the rebuff from yesterday?

SINTOLD: Enough of them have rolled down who forgot how to stand up.

WITTIG: By the golden-bristled sacrifice head!
Whoever wants defiant boar heads must risk the dogs' heads! Blast and blue fire!

RAFFO: Heilo! They're coming! If only I could get out of this stupid walled pen! I'm already feeling as cramped inside as an overslept horse!

HANGO: Me too, my brother-in-arms, me too! — I can't tell you how I feel when suddenly a wild rage seizes me and I want to jump at the throat of one of these croaking frogs and shake the dog's soul out of his whining belly! But then, when this cursed wall suddenly gets in my way and I have to let the son of a

devil run away, I always feel as if I were about to burst like an overheated pot!

(Day breaks, the sun rises. From the right, the sound of the sound of military bugles.)

WITTIG: By Heimold's ear! I heard quite clearly just now! There's barking in the bushes; the dogs from the banks of the Tiber!

KADOLD: That wasn't the sound of a trumpet! Dragons and salamanders!

WITTIG: Raffo! Find out where the trumpeters are coming from.

RAFFO *(jumping up)*: Master of all masters, soon you shall know! *(Exits right offstage.)*

RANDMAR: They're breaking out of the bush. It's the Romans.

KADOLD: Down there, maybe; but over there, to the north? *(The Romans' horns can be heard.)* Do you hear? — That was Rome's dawn greeting! But the horn call?

WITTIG: Surely that's no mystery to you. It was the clan-breakers Vangio and Sido's call — I'd wager my head for it! Prepare garlands of pitch, let pitch and sulfur boil, boil water — they shall find us ready!

(Everyone rises and runs about in confusion. Above the fire, a large cauldron is hung on three spears to melt pitch and

sulfur. Stones and projectiles are brought to the rampart and the tower.)

HANGO (*stirring the cauldron with a pole*): There, my cauldron, brew us a fine morning soup for our guests! Heiho! This will scald the mouth-snappers!

KADOLD: Shame and disgrace on the cowardly clan-breakers!

WITTIG: Loki's punishment on these scoundrels!

ROLF: The King's gold attracts them like the stench of carrion attracts vultures!

HANGO: Come what may, Master Wittig, I grant them their winnings from the bottom of my heart!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire — you!?

HANGO (*still stirring the cauldron*): Yes, I! If King Vannius wins, they will lose everything, including their heads; but should King Vannius remain victorious, the Romans will take everything from them, and they will smash each other's skulls in two! Come what may, their share will remain the same — so let them enjoy it without envy! (*Laughs wildly and stirs the cauldron so that the vapors rise and illuminate him eerily.*)

WITTIG: By your nine-headed great-grandmother, Hango, you spoke the truth! As long as this old earth

turns on its rusty hinges, the brand of shame will blaze on its memory!

RAFFO (*hurrying in from the right*): Master of all masters! The Quadi are approaching from all sides. Shame on the unfaithful!

WITTIG: Let them come as thick as storm clouds; they will not overwhelm these ramparts! The sun defeats even the blackest clouds, even if they appear a thousand times larger than the sun itself.

KADOLD: Dragons and salamanders! They have not yet learned how to besiege castles!

RAFFO: I have still more to report, my master.

(*All those following crowd forward.*)

KADOLD: What more is there?

WITTIG: Quickly! — In few words!

RAFFO: Over there, master, in Heil-Loos, next to Wuotan's Bed, is the Jazyge Duke Kaimar with his horsemen.

WITTIG: I know that, you blabbermouth — tell me what I don't know!

RAFFO: I was there too, my master.

WITTIG (*impatiently*): Blast and — ! Go on!

RAFFO: Wait, master, you'll be amazed! Well, I was there too. It's seething and hissing and billowing, like in this cauldron here. They are rumbling and grumbling, and want to ride. They say that things cannot go on like this, that the horseman belongs on the field and not behind such molehills! — Hey! That would be fine, to thunder down and strike like Father Donar with the Malme hammer!

HANGO: Heilo! Now it's getting fun! — It's time to dance! Let's go!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire!

KADOLD: Dragons and salamanders! That would be like tearing your own head off your shoulders!

RAFFO: Can we hold back the Jazyges?

RANDMAR: The Romans are storming! — To the ramparts! (*The sound of tubas and military horns can be heard.*)

SINTOLD: Bring the pitch pots!

(*Men fetch molten pitch from hanging pots with ladles and pass them up to the ramparts, where they are poured down by others. The pots are constantly being refilled. On the ramparts and towers, fighting with ranged weapons. Tumult and battle noise inside and outside the ramparts.*)

RAFFO (*to RUMOLD*): Burgrave, quicker! Take the cauldron, hurry — !

RUMOLD: May a bear eat you! Why must it be me?
There are others here, too.

RAFFO: You're a wretch; no more, no less! Grab it — it
won't bite you.

RUMOLD (*grumpily taking the cauldron*): You envious
man! May frost shake you, may the fire dog eat you,
may Nir drown you, and may Hangatyr hang you nine
fathoms higher than the most miserable flour thief,
you —

(*The horn call of VANNIUS is heard from the right.*)

NANA (*coming out of the castle with MECHTHILDIS,
walking toward WITTIG*): My sword bearer!

WITTIG (*going toward her with KADOLD*): Queen?!

KADOLD: Hail to you, Queen!

ALL (*in the midst of the battle*): Hail to you, Queen!

NANA: Hail to you! — My beloved and loyal ones! (*To
WITTIG*.) My sword bearer! Today I need my sword
and your loyalty! (*To KADOLD*.) Your loyalty too,
Marshal! Destiny must be fulfilled.

WITTIG: Queen of queens! I like you this way; regal
and fierce like a Valkyrie! But the end has not come!
Once again the sun of Vannius will tear apart the
storm clouds and scatter the disheveled clouds along
all the storm paths into the air!

NANA: My sword bearer should not presume to comfort me! It is no longer storm clouds that now creep up on the sun of Vannius — the sun wolf himself is coming to devour them. The beginning of the end is dawning menacingly!

WITTIG: It is not yet time, Queen —

KADOLD: These ramparts stand firm, my Queen! Firm as giants' castles, and ours will be the victory! (*VANNIUS' horn call is heard.*) Do you hear it, queen, the battle cry of your royal husband? No king who is about to die calls like that!

NANA (*proudly*): Marshal! The sun of Vannius will set victorious, and joyfully it will rise from its dungeon of human flesh to Valhalla, for it was too divine for this tomb of decay!

WITTIG: Valkyrie of the King! Your sword in my fist will blaze like that of Mihilas in battle with the dragon!

KADOLD (*admiringly*): Queen! Your highness —

ALL: Hail King Vannius!

(*VANNIUS comes with some of the King's warriors from the right on the rampart, in the midst of the fiercest fighting.*)

NANA (*calling to him*): Hail to my golden eagle!

VANNIUS: Hail to you, proud eagle. Victory is ours again! The storm has abated!

RANDMAR: Hail to you, King! The Roman has had enough! He is retreating!

SINTOLD (*calling down*): Hey! There are some lying down there! Take them with you!

VANNIHOLD (*coming from the right under the rampart with some of the King's warriors*): Father! The people of our cousins are fleeing!

ALL: Hail to our young lord!

VANNIUS (*blowing his horn joyfully*.)

(*Cheers of "Hail" from all sides. The men climb down from the rampart and only the guards with SINTOLD and RANDMAR remain on the rampart and tower. The cauldron is lifted from the fire and the fire extinguished. The men lie down behind and others go off to the right. Only VANNIUS, NANA, VANNIHOLD, WITTIG, KADOLD, MECHTHILDIS, the King's warriors RANDMAR [on the tower] and SINTOLD [on the rampart] remain. From below, the sound of a horn and shouts can be heard.*)

ALL: Hail to the King!

VANNIUS: Hail to all loyal subjects! Thank you, brave men! (*Blows his horn joyfully*.)

ALL: Hail to the King!

VANNIHOLD (*seeing his mother*): Dear little Mother!
(Embraces her passionately.)

NANA: My Vanni!

VANNIUS (*jumps down from the rampart and rushes toward NANA, embracing her*): Nana! So closely confined, and yet so rarely in your dear presence!

NANA (*with gentle reproach*): My Vannius! Why did you let our Vanni leave your side?

VANNIHOLD (*quickly interjecting*): Dear little mother, forgive me! I am to blame! — I couldn't tear myself away from the rampart, but it was in vain! Ten javelins wasted!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! — Young lord!

VANNIHOLD: Yes, I — I am ashamed to tell my master-at-arms! Ten spears wasted, on account of Vangio! I thought I could fetch him from his horse, but scarcely halfway there, my throwing iron sank into the dust like a tired sparrow!

VANNIUS (*laughing*): Didn't I tell you, my boy? Only Wuotan's spear could fly that far! Cousin Vangio is not as hot-tempered as you; he knows better how far a throwing spear can fly. Take comfort, boy, you threw like no other!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire, young lord! Only cool blood in a man's battle! Ten throwing spears! As if they were forged in the blink of an eye! By Father Voland — !

VANNIHOLD (*gently patting his weapons master WITTIG on the shoulder and flattering him*): Don't get all grumpy again, master! I'll forge them anew; don't be so angry with your Vanni, master.

WITTIG (*good-naturedly grumbling*): Blast and blue fire, young lord! Am I your nurse? I'm pleased with you, you fought bravely — you will cure many a capable fellow of their headaches.

(*Commotion and shouting behind the scene on the right.*)

VANNIUS: What is this?

ROLF (*coming from the right*): King! The Jazyges are saddling up!

NANA: Enemies in our own camp!

KADOLD: King! You must hold them back!

VANNIUS: By Wuotan's wrath! I can't control them anymore! My horse is exhausted! — Only gold will keep them, and they make more and more impossible demands when I ask them to stay until the enemies have withdrawn.

WITTIG: You must hold them at all costs, for if they leave, they will ally themselves with Vangio and Sido, or with the Romans.

NANA: Oh, this alliance! A people can only help itself, and the ally of a king must be his own power!

KADOLD: Let me try to keep them, King.

ROLF: It is too late, here comes Duke Kaimar himself.

KAIMAR (*coming from the right with some Jazyges. Curious people follow him and remain standing behind, crowded together*): King of the Quadi, may the sun gild your fortune!

VANNIUS: Duke Kaimar, welcome!

NANA: Greetings, Duke!

KAIMAR: The sun horses neigh jubilantly in victory, what delays the sun's favorite from pursuing his fortune? Tell me, King!

VANNIUS: My Duke, it would be premature; there are still too many enemies before the castle! — We must wait!

KAIMAR: The sun's favorite always wants to wait, wait, wait! He wants to wait until the moon chases away the sun, and the dark enemies of the sun brew death and destruction for him! — The Jazyges are different from the Quadi, my Sun King! Impatience is the Jazyge

duke's cloak; stormy desire is his horse, lightning his path — and his horsemen rain down like hail among their frightened enemies. Yes, my Sun King, that is how the Jazyges ride! And when the stupid enemies finally begin to look around — Hui! Pschst! The Jazyges are already gone, and — Hui! Pschst! They are already at their heels like panthers! You shall see, Sun King! Let us out of this mouse-trap in which my horses are rusting!

VANNIUS: Duke of the Jazyges, I cannot grant that, nor are the enemies tired enough; wait a few more days —

KAIMAR: Favored of the sun, the Jazyges want to ride and will ride when they want; you are their friend, but not their master.

VANNIUS: Duke Kaimar, listen to the voice of a friend! A helmet full of gold, if you will only stay here for one more week —

KAIMAR: Sun King, my friend! I do as you wish. Give each of my horsemen a helmet full of gold, and the Jazyges will remain in your cage, which you call Stilifrieda.

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire!

KADOLD: Dragons and salamanders!

VANNIUS: Friend Duke of the Jazyges — we ride!

(All frightened and astonished.)

NANA: Vannius!

WITTIG: By all the victorious Aesir! You must not do that — !

KAIMAR: The Jazyge wants to ride, Sun King, and the Jazyge will ride! (*Turns to leave.*)

WITTIG (*stepping in his way*): By the dark Hel! Jazyge! — You will not ride!

RANDMAR (*from the tower*): The Romans are marching to attack! Help!

SINTOLD (*from the ramparts*): To the ramparts!

(*Loud trumpet blasts and horn calls.*)

VANNIUS (*appeasing WITTIG*): Let the Jazyges ride! (*To KAIMAR.*) Duke of the Jazyges! Ride then in the name of the god of war, as is your desire. May the victorious gods accompany you and lead you to victory! You, Jazyge, ride through the horse gate, north of the castle — we will follow you through this gate! Then we will have the enemies in the middle.

KAIMAR: Son of the sun! Never will the Jazyge ride into battle with so many words, like you clumsy Quadi! He swings himself merrily onto his little horse, and — Hui! Pschst! He flies into the enemy and strikes them where he finds them on the ear! Sun King! The Jazyges are riding! May the sun send you victory! (*Hurries off to the right with his men.*)

VANNIUS: Good luck, Jazyges! (*After KAIMAR's departure*) Get everything ready for a sortie!

(*Runs to the rampart, renewed battle noise.*)

NANA: Vannius! You are running to your death!
(*Overcome with grief, throws herself at VANNIUS' chest.*)

VANNIUS: Queen of Eagles! King Vannius may ride to Valhalla, but never to death! Be my Valkyrie!

NANA (*composing herself and rising proudly, with her eyes raised*): Fraya! You too were robbed of your Zeizzo, and you too had him returned to you! You will give me back my Vannius! (*To VANNIUS.*) Draw my Vannius, the dark horn wills it so. I will be your Valkyrie!

(*Thunder rolls.*)

VANNIUS: So be it, in the name of all victory! The iron dice of the Fates are rolling; the stake is the work of a king's life — let the last dice throw of the Quadi king be dared! Open the tower gate!

WITTING: By Loki's evil spirit, King, be warned — !

KADOLD: King of the Quadi! You have other duties than to destroy your life's work by your own downfall! Wait, and victory will be yours!

VANNIUS: Victory!? The whole Quadi is staring at me with weapons, my kingdom is barely contained by

these walls. The foolishness of the people keeps them from recognizing that only battle can lead them to greatness — that they must defend the wealth I have created for them with proud fighting spirit. The spirit of rebellion has taken hold of the people; they believe that in alliance with the Romans they will enjoy the fruits I have created in peace, and will only take up the sword again when it is sunk in servitude and poverty. I can no longer help the people, therefore I will fall. Open the gate!

WITTIG: The time has not yet come, King — !

VANNIHOLD: You must not fall, Father! I will go out with you, but give me now a sword befitting the King's son, and you shall see me win victory for you! The Quadi and the Romans shall see wonders! Yes, let the gate be opened, father — but for victory! Our victorious father Wuotan must grant you victory, for you fight for the good, and he himself wants to pave the way for the good with his fighting spirit.

VANNIUS: Yes, my son, that is his will, but not in the sense that we humans understand it. Good will prevail because it must prevail, but those who fight for good do not always prevail. I fall for the truth, which my present human life is not enough to fight for, but I will come back to build on what I have now laid the foundation for in a new human life. My work is not lost! The sword, my Vanni, shall be yours; today you

have truly earned it. (*He gives WITTIG a sign, who leaves the castle.*)

VANNIHOLD (*embracing his father*): Father, thank you!
You shall see (*rushing to his mother, embracing her*) Dear mother! A sword!

NANA (*embracing her son*): The last proud joy! (*They hold each other tightly for a long time.*)

(*WITTIG comes out of the castle with RAFFO and HANGO; they bring a helmet, shield, and sword. He wants to hand them over to the King.*)

SINTOLD (*from the rampart*): King! Your cousins are running toward the horse gate!

WITTIG: Blast and blue fire! Let them run! They are running to their deaths.

RANDMAR (*from the tower*): The Romans are gaining access! It's getting serious — !

VANNIUS: The more, the better! The bigger the crowd, the more powerful the blows! (*To WITTIG.*) My faithful treasure keeper! Give! The time is short, but right for the knighting ceremony of a king's son! — In the midst of the battle, take the sword, my son! (*Girds him with the same.*) In your hand, my Vanni, may this flame of wounds be a ray of sunshine, a sword of sunlight that shall grant you victory in every just

cause! Now, young lord Vannihold, if you are a man, act like one! You are of age!

NANA (*takes the helmet from WITTIG's hands and places it on her son's head*): Like the cloud-helmet of the sun, which shields it when beset by envious giants, so may this helmet shield your sunny head, my sweet child! — And as in the grim roar of the noble gods' battle come flashes and thunders from the cloud helmet, so let the fierceness of battle flash from your flaming eyes, and let your tongue thunder death and destruction upon the enemy! (*She embraces him, moved.*)

WITTIG (*handing him the shield, on which a crowned red eagle is painted on a white field*): The shield of a man, young lord Vannihold, is justice! The color of justice is red, the symbol of justice is the eagle! The red eagle with the King's crown reminds you that the King may only unleash the storm of battle for the sake of justice. So go forth like lightning and thunder, and bring home the justice you have defended victoriously with the shield.

VANNIHOLD (*looking around proudly with self-confidence*): Threefold was the blessing I received with the glorious man's panoply that ennobled me as a man! Threefold is my oath of gratitude, my beloved ones! (*Drawing his sword and kneeling down, with his eyes raised toward the sun and the sword blade pointed toward it.*) You, father Sun, up there in the bright

etheric heights of Valhalla! You, whom I honor lovingly in my father — hear my oath of gratitude for this dearest gift from my father, for this sword of the sun! Holy sun fire storms through my veins, and with joyful shivers I feel your divine fire flaming out of the blade! To you, father of battle, and to you, my father Vannius, be all the glory that I will one day achieve with this blade. I want no other reward than to be celebrated by the mighty voices of the skalds! — You, noble Fraya, all-blessed love of the world! To you in whom I honor my mother, I give thanks for the gift of love, and to you I vow that when the strife of men is settled, I will help in the great work that enables the salvation of the future. — You, faithful guardian of the gods, Heimdold! I honor you in my master-at-arms Wittig! He taught me to practice what man's spirit and man's strength can do, and I will boldly climb the highest steps of glory with pride, and then gratefully proclaim: Hero Wittig was my master!

RANDMAR (*from the tower*): The Quadi of Vangio and Sido are wavering! The Jazyges are breaking through their ranks!

ALL: Hail to the King! Hail to the Jazyges!

VANNIHOLD (*jumping up, with his sword raised*): Now, my father! We both challenge the enemy of divine justice to battle!

VANNIUS: Open the gate! To you, my loyal blacksmith, I entrust the Queen and this castle! (*Embracing NANA.*) Farewell, my proud eagle, farewell! I will see you again, here or there!

NANA (*forcing herself to remain strong*): My Vannius, farewell! You will see me again — whether as your queen or as your Valkyrie, your Nana I will remain in this world as in the next! (*Long embrace, then embracing Vannihold.*) My bright sun-son — (*the pain overwhelms her and the word chokes her voice.*)

(*ROLF has opened the gate, all the royal warriors flock around the King, the remaining Quadi around KADOLD as a second group, and await the King. WITTIG with RAFFO, HANGO and MECHTHILDIS remain behind the Queen; RANDMAR on the tower, SINTOLD on the rampart, ROLF at the door.*)

VANNIHOLD (*embracing NANA*): Dear little mother, before the sun goes down, I will bring my dear father home safe and sound! What proud joy! My first battle as a royal warrior! (*Breaks free.*)

VANNIUS (*in a brief embrace*): Nana. (*Blows his horn, storms out of the gate with the cry:*) Faithful to the freedom of the Quadi until death!

(*Vannihold and the others follow him.*)

ALL: Hie! For the freedom of the Quadi!

NANA (*Starts to follow, but restrains herself and calls out*):
May all victory be yours!

(*NANA stands with WITTIG in the middle of the stage, watching those who are leaving. ROLF closes the door.*)

NANA (*to herself, as if in prayer*): If you, Father of Victory, do not perform a miracle, I will see only the soulless bodies of my loved ones! Fraya, Fraya! I wanted to be strong, but I cannot forget that I am a woman, that I am a wife, that I am a mother! I know that they will fall, and yet I beg you, O noble one (*kneels down with raised hands*), give them victory, preserve their lives! (*Covers her face with both hands and threatens to collapse.*)

MECHTHILDIS (*rushes to the Queen to help her*): Dear, good queen!

WITTIG (*wipes his eyes*): Blast and blue fire, old fellow, you're not a rain cloud! (*Controls himself and starts to encourage the Queen.*) Queen of queens, you want to be a Valkyrie and you act like a woman! (*To MECHTHILDIS.*) Go away, we have no use for you here; hide behind the haystack. There you can cry with the cats or whomever you want!

MECHTHILDIS: You rude hulk! You could teach me!
Dear, good Queen.

WITTIG (*barely able to control his emotion*): Blast and blue fire! You housecat, are you — ?

NANA (*overcomes herself and stands up with difficulty, refusing MECHTHILDIS' support*): Go, good Mechthildis, go into the house. I don't need your help.

MECHTHILDIS: Queen! (*Exit into the castle.*)

NANA (*to herself*): I must be strong. I want to be a Valkyrie! (*Stepping toward WITTIG, gradually regaining her composure.*) My faithful sword bearer! Be patient and do not despise me because I succumbed to overwhelming grief. Prepare the funeral pyre that will unite me with my husband and son, for the ride to the other world.

WITTIG: Valkyrie of the King! — Your sword bearer is to prepare your funeral pyre!? By Brunhilde's flaming sea, queen of queens! — Blast and blue fire, is this Stilifrieda still too small for your funeral pyre? Let it blaze with all its courtyards, for boundless as the King's greatness shall be his death sacrifice! — You yourself shall light it! And when his free-fought spirit starts rising upward from the flames to leave our Midgard, then you too, heroic and bold, will break free from the confining prison of your body, and your mighty spirit struggle out of this decaying ground, to swing itself onto the smoke-blackened horse and carry your Vannius to Valhalla as a Valkyrie!

NANA: Sword-bearer! I will do as you say, but help me if the weakness of a woman should overcome me!

WITTIG: Valkyrie of the King! Your victory over that woman will shine all the more proudly out there in the higher world!

RANDMAR: Hey, look how it flashes! Queen, you must see this for yourself! Come up to the battlements, Queen! — How the young lord Vannihold in the Roman hordes rages like the golden-bristled boar in the tangled cloud-army!

NANA: Sword bearer, come! (*Both climb onto the ramparts.*)

SINTOLD: And the King! — Like Donar in combat with giants! One glance, one blow, one dead man!

NANA: Victorious Wuotan, grant them victory!

WITTIG: Queen! Now I envy a woman such as yourself! — I envy you for having carried such a miraculous hero in your womb! Blast and blue fire, young Vannihold's sword raises an army! Look, Queen, look! — I beg you, just look! How they flee! Wherever the young lord points his sword! I, an old man, sit here and watch and wish I could be there! Hail, Vannihold! — Now that was a kiss!

NANA (*with mixed feelings*): My son! What a wonderfully gruesome spectacle for a mother (*kneeling down in prayer.*) Queen of heaven in the heights of the clouds — yourself a mother whose son, the bright

Balder, has been murdered — you merciful one,
protect my son and my husband!

RANDMAR: Roman murder and arson! The Jazyges are
fleeing —

SINTOLD: Go to Hel with your horses!

WITTIG: Don't be a fool! — That is their trick.

NANA: You glorious lady, hear me! Save my son and my
husband!

RANDMAR: Dragons and salamanders —

NANA (*jumps up with a cry of horror*): Sword bearer! —
My horse! A sword! (*Starts to rush from the wall, but
remains standing as if spellbound by what he has seen.*)
Vannius has fallen!

RANDMAR: The King — !

SINTOLD: The Jazyges are coming from the other side!

WITTIG: Hey! What's happening? Look, Queen! —
Young Vannihold!

NANA: The King! The King! Can you see him, Sword
Bearer?

WITTIG: He's in the thick of the fighting, I can't —

NANA: He's rising! — Victorious father Wuotan! Lord
of battles! — He's staggering as if he were mortally
wounded. That was brave, Vannihold! They want to

fight their way out of the crowd. (*She hears the King's horn call.*) How that once made me happy (*echoes him softly but sadly*) and today — !

WITTIG: The Jazyges are coming to their aid. Blast and blue fire! — Attack, Vannihold, attack!

RANDMAR: They are surrounded!

SINTOLD: There — the traitors Vangio and Sido are charging toward them. Ride to Hel and the corpse eater Nidhogg! You —

NANA: (*lets out a cry of horror*).

WITTIG: By Hoder's throw! — Gone! Lost!

NANA: Vannihold! — My sweet — child! (*Sinks down into herself, sobbing.*)

WITTIG: (*sinks down next to NANA*): Balder is gone! The sun has been murdered! (*Bends over NANA.*) Queen! — The woman is dead! Valkyrie, awaken!

SINTOLD: Our young lord Vanni!

RANDMAR: Well done, Kadold! — Now the Romans are retreating, we are freer. Hey, how they mow them down! — Now they are lifting him up.

SINTOLD: That is Rumold with his Eburoduners, carrying the King. —

WITTIG: Valkyrie! They are bringing you the dead.
Come — !

RANDMAR: Vangio and Sidos' men are pushing forward. They want to take Stilifrida!

SINTOLD: Guard the gate. Ramparts! Quick! Bring firebrands!

RANDMAR: Rolf! Open the gate!

(On the rampart, the few men unite to defend themselves. They bring firebrands, torches, pitch garlands, and other ranged weapons. NANA rises from the ground, sobbing and broken, supported by WITTIG, who himself is swaying and seems to have grown old. NANA and WITTIG stagger silently from the rampart. ROLF opens the gate. Quadi carry VANNIUS and VANNIHOST on stretchers made of shields and spears into the castle. Not a single royal soldier returns. Quadi enter in a long line. A commotion breaks out around them.)

RANDMAR (*calling down from the tower*): Quadi, to the ramparts with the rearguard! Or Kadold will succumb!
Hurry!

(Those who have entered place the stretchers in the center at the front and rush to the rampart, where a fierce battle begins in the distance. NANA, led by WITTIG, steps between the two stretchers and sinks down sobbing and broken onto corpse of VANNIHOST. The battle rages on in the open gate.)

KADOLD (*outside the door, through which his voice can be heard*): Retreat and close the gate! I'll cover the rear! Hey! You scoundrels! Give my regards to Vangio and Sido, if you find them in Hel! (*Noise of battle.*)

VOICE from outside: Get out of the way, you sack of flour! Stilifrida is ours!

KADOLD: You're the sack of flour! — Go to Hel! Randmar! Dragons and salamanders! To the door! Worry about the blue moon calf instead of me! — To the door!

(*ROLF closes the door noisily. The tumult now only muffled.*)

KADOLD (*from outside, only muffled*): So, you rabbit heads! — Farewell!

RANDMAR: Hey! Burning pitch! — Down there! (*Burning pitch is poured from the tower. Terrified howls from outside.*)

KADOLD (*from outside*): Randmar! Old stable brother! Hand me your spear! (*RANDMAR lowers his spear over the parapet, over which KADOLD is being pulled up.*)

RANDMAR: Help! — The Marshal is no feather pillow! (*Everyone at the tower helps pull him up.*)

SINTOLD: Pour burning sulfur on the pile of toads!

(*Noise of battle on the ramparts and outside.*)

KADOLD (*becomes visible over the tower parapet. Tattered, without helmet, but with a split shield and all his weapons. He swings himself onto the tower*): Roman murder and arson! Thank you! (*Calling down.*) Forgive me! I could not split the skulls of all of you! — Goodbye! (*Climbs down from the tower and goes to NANA, who is lying on VANNIHOLDs corpse, sobbing softly. The distant battle between wall and tower, like the noise of battle from outside, continues until the end.*)

WITTIG (*staggering toward KADOLD*): Marshal! (*Bursts into tears, sobbing violently.*) Marshal! The end —

KADOLD: Old blood brother! — The end! We go to Valhalla with them! (*They embrace behind the Queen, between the biers.*)

VANNIUS (*stirs and speaks like a seer*): Nana. My Valkyrie!

NANA (*jumping up and turning to VANNIUS, before whom she sinks to her knees*): Vannius! — Forgive your Nana forgetting the wife for the mother! — Fraya! Fraya!! (*Sinks down sobbing onto VANNIUS, covering him with kisses.*)

VANNIUS (*as above*): Nana, my Valkyrie! — Come! Lift me up from this worldly torment! Look over there to Valhalla — !

(Above the wall, the blue sky that until now had been clear, darkens. The cloud formations, which become ever clearer,

take shape as a fantastic castle with towers and high buildings, to which a rainbow bridge in the seven shining colors seems to lead up. The cloud castle "Valhalla" itself shines in brightest light, so that the blue sky seems almost darkened. ¹⁾ From the tall buildings of the cloud castle, lightning flashes continuously in all directions, and ghostly blue light flickers magically around the whole thing.)

All QUADI (*sinking to their knees in a praying position; their heads bowed, their hands raised, their palms facing upwards with fingers spread. [The hands are not folded, as in Christian prayer])*: Walvater is approaching! — The end of the world is coming!

WITTIG: Herian, take us in!

KADOLD: We follow our king.

RUMOLD: Eburodun with you!

1) Note for the set designer: The cloud castle must be constructed from cloud formations and must not resemble a stone building standing in the clouds. It must give the viewer the impression of something superhuman, supernatural, and must therefore not resemble any work of human hands. At first glance, it must resemble a bank of clouds brightly lit by the sun, as high summer storms often appear when the piercing, high summer sun illuminates the approaching thunderstorm, and stands behind the viewer, who thus sees the clouds rising directly in front of him, in full light. Only on closer inspection must the cloud castle become recognizable, as if growing out of the cloud formations.

VANNIUS (*like a seer*): Valhalla opens its gates! — Quadi — my Eburoduners — farewell! — I will come again to bring you what you not yet been able to grasp. — Again I will walk among you, my — beloved ones — farewell! — To — Valhalla — my — Valkyrie! (*Dies.*)

NANA (*collapses with a heart-rending cry over the King's corpse*): Vannius! — My Vannius! You jealous gods! — Why do you give us mortals, only to take them away again twice over? (*She sinks into quiet sobbing, which gradually dies away, whereupon she remains motionless, as if overcome by deep faintness, lying on the dead VANNIUS.*)

WITTIG: King's Valkyrie! — Awake!

NANA (*rises slowly, as if awakening from a heavy sleep, and gradually grows into the figure of a heroine*): My sword keeper, thank you! Yes, thank you! — Vannius! (*With a softly trembling voice*) My Vannihold! (*From now on increasingly wild, growing to immeasurable greatness.*) Your Valkyrie struggles out of the mortal woman, like a colorful sun-butterfly from its rigid chrysalis. — Fraya! You noble goddess, chooser of the slain, you queen of the Valkyries — by your elemental magic power I conjure you; stand by my side and support me — grant me aid; accomplish now what Nana imploringly demands of you! And should the land, as far as my eyes can see — as far as the flaming sun circles it in a day — sink into the abyss of primeval

horror, and should a thousand streams of water pour into it, a thousand seas of fire rage over it, hissing, roaring, crashing, raging with the wildly turbulent waters in thunderous fury of unrestrained stormy waves — and should even this old earth itself waver, burst, the sun fall from the heavens, the moon and stars sparkle and collide with each other, and break into a thousand shards — yes, should all the heavenly castles collapse into themselves and bury the entire universe under their fiery ruins in a wild blaze of flames — accompanied by all this, and ten times harsher curses to follow — you, Fraya, most powerful sorceress queen, are conjured to do what Nana, bound by fate, demands of you!

(Nana stands upright between the biers, her hair disheveled and wildly fluttering, her eyes sparkling and rolling. Rigid horror holds her surroundings in its spell. Dark storm clouds frame the shining image of Valhalla, which stands out all the more brightly as night seems to fall completely on earth. Lightning flashes, thunder rolls, and stormy winds howl around the castle and the crowd. A bright flash of lightning illuminates the dark night for a moment stormy atmosphere; a booming clap of thunder rolls through the howling storm.)

NANA (*imploring, with fluttering robes and flying hair, in wild ecstasy*): Fraya! You ancient mighty queen of creation in the heights of the sun, you mistress of all gods and all humans, almighty mistress of sorcery, you

incomprehensibly great queen of life and death — I hear your voice shaking the clouds and ringing out from the thunder — with wild joy Nana hears that you will grant her wishes!

(The storm intensifies as darkness increases amid constant lightning and thunder.)

NANA *(as above)*: Fraya! Immeasurably great goddess of the world! Let your golden curls of fire descend in waves upon the soulless human shells of my dear loved ones, weave your noble purple cloak of flames around the proud Stilifrieda, and consecrate my giant altar with Surtur's sacred heavenly fire, as no mortal has ever offered to you!

(Another violent outbreak of thunder.)

NANA *(as before)*: Fraya! You exalted ruler of life and death. You sublime Valkyrie queen! — Hear my last words! — Fraya, you heavenly one, Nana consecrates herself to you as a Valkyrie! Nana is yours! — Accept this sacrifice, you mighty one! Give me a sign that you will grant this too!

(It is almost night, the storm is raging at its most violent. Crackling lightning flashes down accompanied by thunder, striking the castle and tower, which immediately burst into flames. The sky is illuminated by lightning, in which Valhalla shines forth as if from a sea of fire. The rainbow bridge remains visible until the end. [It is the road for the

disembodied spirits to the homes of the gods.] Everyone flees to the right, howling and screaming; MECHTHILDIS, GERBURGA, and WIEBURGA as well as WITTIG, KADOLD, RANDMAR, SINTOLD, RUMOLD, ROLF, RAFFO, and HANGO gather silently around NANA. The ramparts are abandoned. One hears the sound of digging at the castle gate from outside, as well as incomprehensible battle cries. Lightning, thunder, and storm continue. No one thinks of guarding the gate; everyone stands are shaken by the spell of what they have just experienced.)

NANA (*in a frenzy of ecstasy, forgetting everything around her*): Fraya! Divine queen of the creative powers! The Valkyries rejoice and give thanks to you! Raging and raving as chooser of the dead, I will pile up a mountain of the slain around my beloved dead — for as boundless as the greatness of King Vannius shall be his funeral sacrifice! (*Turning to the corpse of VANNIUS, taking his helmet and putting it on herself.*) Give me your helmet, my king, and your sword too (*takes it from the corpse*) — give your Valkyrie her last adornment! (*Takes the shield from VANNIOLD's bier.*) Your shield, my Vanni; give it to the chooser of the slain. She needs it for her choice of the dead! — Now upward! Upward, to the frenzied dance of the Valkyries!

(Nana stands with her sword raised and turns towards the gate. Her warriors gather silently around her. The door

collapses and numerous enemies rush in. A furious battle ensues in front of the funeral bier, where the slain pile up. The storm continues.)

NANA (*fighting shoulder to shoulder with WITTIG*):
Come, come to the dance of death with the Valkyries!
Come, you perjurers and traitors, you breakers of faith and destroyers of clans! (*Kills several enemies.*) Your king shall have a rich following on his ghostly ride to Valhalla! (*She sings the horn call of King VANNIUS with wild jubilation.*) Hey! How proud and glorious it sounds in the Valkyrie dance! Come on! Heissa! Come on! To the whirling dance of death (*Cheers, once again blaring the horn call, goes out.*)

(All of NANA's men are slain, only WITTIG stands beside her, covering her. Numerous slain men lie all around. The fight continues unabated, the storm rages on. In the burning gate, VANGIO and SIDO appear by armed men. Protected by their men, they attack WITTIG and NANA. A furious fight breaks out.)

WITTIG (*advancing toward the two*): By Brunhilde's sea of flames! You scoundrels! You've come just in time!

VANGIO: To make up for the mistake of long ago, you gold worm? — Yes!

NANA (*to VANGIO*): Get away! (*She strikes furiously at him with the flat of her blade.*) No Valkyrie will choose you! Live! Tremble in cowardly straw death,

chattering your teeth! Flee and live! Suffocate in your shame, you clan-breaker! (*Under continuous blows, which he feels painfully.*) Show the funeral pyre of your cousin the honor by yielding! Flee!

VANGIO: Surrender, you wild magpie. King Vangio grants you your life!

NANA (*laughing furiously*): Dishonorable coward! My sword is too good to discipline you with it! (*Throws down her sword and shield and leaps furiously at VANGIO's throat to strangle him.*) You shall not die by an honest sword! — No! I will tear you limb from limb while you are still alive, I will rip out your timid heart with my fingers to fatten mangy dogs on your disgusting flesh! (*Furious fight; WITTIG covers NANA.*)

VANGIO (*cowardly wailing*): Help! Your king — !

(*Several armed men rush at WITTIG, he kills them; SIDO watches timidly from afar. VANGIO sees his advantage and mortally wounds NANA.*)

VANGIO: Die! — Wild Fangga!

(*NANA sinks into WITTIG's arms, who gently lays her on the bier of King VANNIUS.*)

WITTIG (*bent over NANA*): Valkyrie of the King! Now come! — To Valhalla! Already your smoky horse neighs impatiently!

NANA (*to WITTIG*): Sword bearer! — You ride with us! (*To VANGIO*.) Thank you, kinslayer! — Become King of the Quadi, but bear the curse of eternal shame until the end of time! (*Dying*.) Come, smoke horse! — Upwards to — Valhalla! — Your — cloud sisters — are — beckoning! — Vannius! — My sweet Vannihold! — Come! — Come! — Come! (*Dies*.)

VANGIO (*To WITTIG, who is oblivious to the surroundings, wistfully watching NANA and tenderly stroking the curls from her cheek*): Master of all masters! Your heroism conquers me; I will honor you! King Vangio grants you peace! Be my treasure guardian and remain faithful to me —

WITTIG (*laughing wildly*): You, Frog King? I know your desires only too well! — The King's sovereign gold, you insolent boy, lies buried and enchanted nine fathoms deep in the bosom of the earth! You will never find the treasure of Quadi — not until distant times, when it will be given to a family that will be only the last shadow of your cursed memory.

VANGIO (*urgently*): Master of all masters! I will cover you in gold, tell me where the treasure lies —

WITTIG (*points to the gate, which is just collapsing with a crash and whose flames are licking over*): Look there — flee, coward, if your shameful life is worth more to you than a rat's! (*Cries of terror and howls of pain from the gate*.)

SIDO (*frozen with fear, jumps toward VANGIO, calling*):
Let us save ourselves, brother!

VANGIO: Smith! — The treasure — where?

WITTIG (*laughing scornfully*): You fools! — it is sunken and enchanted! What King Vannius built will grow, multiply, and endure, like your shame! — What King Vannius possessed in gold is sunk until the spell is broken! — Begone!

SIDO (*dragging VANGIO away; they climb onto the rampart*): Help! — Help!

VANGIO: The Quadi gold! (*Is seized by SIDO and forced to jump from the rampart.*) It is lost! (*They save themselves by jumping into the open air.*)

WITTIG (*looks after them contemptuously and laughs wildly, then sits down at NANA's feet*): Marbod! Royal friend! (*He pulls his iron ring from his arm and looks at it thoughtfully.*) By this iron ring, I vowed to protect your child. My oath is fulfilled, your Nana is a Valkyrie and you an Einherier! I can now appear before you in peace. (*He stabs himself.*) Walvater, now to you! (*Dies.*)

(*Amid thunder and lightning, Stilfrieda collapses, flames engulf the dead, a bright rainbow shines and Valhalla glows in the clouds in the brightest sunlight.*)

(*The curtain falls.*)

End.